

Unwanted ※ by Imin_alot_offandoms69

Series: A's book [15]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Abusive Neil Hargrove, Adoption, Bisexual Eleven | Jane Hopper, Bisexual Mike Wheeler, F/F, F/M, Gay Will Byers, Lesbian Maxine "Max" Mayfield, M/M, Maxine "Max" Mayfield Needs a Hug, Muteness, Past Child Abuse, Past Rape/Non-con, Robin Buckley & Maxine "Max" Mayfield Friendship, Self-Harm, Steve Harrington & Maxine "Max" Mayfield Have a Sibling Relationship

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Robin Buckley, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Maxine "Max" Mayfield & Mike Wheeler, Robin Buckley & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Robin Buckley & Steve Harrington & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

Mike has everything hes ever wanted. His friends, his girlfriend. What happens when his parents inform him that they're adopting a girl his age.

1. One ※

"Micheal! Can you come down here?!"

Mike ran down the stairs quickly, not wanting to get in trouble. "Hey mom what's up?" Karen motioned to the couch where his two siblings were sat. He sat next to them and sighed. "Did we do something wrong?"

Ted shook his head, "no Nancy. You guys did nothing wrong." Mike looked around before speaking up, "then what's going on?" Karen smiled at Ted, "you wanna tell them or should I?" Ted nodded at her, allowing her to keep talking. "Well, we've decided to adopt a child!"

Those six words could make or break a family. That did both to the Wheeler family. Karen and Ted thought something was missing. Mike hated his idea but Nancy loved it. Holly was oblivious to everything.

"Mom! I think you have enough kids!"

"How old are they?" Nancy was optimistic about everything, always looking at the bright side of everything. "Shes Mike's age, 14." The three siblings looked at each other.

"She?!"

"She wants to adopt. They're picking her up tomorrow." Mike wheeler was in his basement complaining to his friends. "What's her name?! How old is she? What does she look like?!" Mike rolled his eyes at Dustin's questions.

"Maxine, 14, and ugly as fuck! She's short, has red hair, stupid blue eyes. She just came to the stupid center out of fucking California. They said she was abused then ran away to the police station. They shipped her to Hawkins. I already hate her."

Dustin looked at Mike again, "please don't tell me shes gonna start hanging with us." Mike shook his head furiously, "I'd rather be taken by the demogorgon than let her hang with us! No offense." Will shook

his head and laughed softly, "none taken." El just held onto his arm.

There was a knock on the basement door. "What mom?!"

"Micheal! We have to re-do your room!"

All the kids looked at each other with confused faces. "What?!"

2. Two ※

"Micheal! We need to talk about this!"

"SHE IS NOT SLEEPING IN MY FUCKING ROOM!"

"Language!"

Mike had sent all his friends home when his mom came down to the basement. She had told him that he needed to share a room with Max, as there were no other rooms in the house. Nancy was older and doesn't want a teenager in her room, and Holly's too young. That only left Mike. "Micheal please!"

Nancy walked into the house with a small redhead behind him. Mike looked back at his mom, obviously pissed. "YOU SAID TOMORROW!"

"Micheal-"

"NO MOM! I never asked for this! I never asked for her to come and fuck everything up! She can sleep in the fucking basement." The tall boy ran to his room and slammed the door. He grabbed his walkie?
"El? El are you there? Over."

"Mike? What's wrong? Over."

"The girl, shes here. Ugh she looks annoying! And why is she so skinny?! Its like her clothes barley fit her! Over."

"Where is she gonna sleep? Over."

"Mom wants us to sleep in the same room. Over."

"Gross! I don't like her, over."

"Me neither El. Night! Over and out."

"I'm sorry about him." Karen was making Max a bed in the basement.
"Listen sweetheart if you need anything just come to my room okay?"

Max nodded, holding her bag and skateboard tightly. Karen sighed and took the things from her, making the small girl flinch. "Hey it's okay I'm not gonna hurt you. You wanna change sweetheart?" Max nodded slightly and tried to take her shirt off. She huffed when she realized she was too weak. Karen looked at the girl with sad eyes and helped her get changed. "You're all skin and bones sweetheart."

"Goodnight!" She went to go turned off the lights when Max yelled. Karen looked back at the girl, "what's wrong?" Max shook her head and pointed at the lights. "You want them on?" The redhead nodded and Karen smiled. "Okay. Goodnight."

"Mike! Nancy! Max! Breakfast!"

Mike and Nancy came running down the stairs to the table. They started eating their eggos quickly. Karen looked at the table and sighed, "wheres Max?" Mike mumbled a small 'who cares.' She glared at him, "well Micheal, you can go downstairs and wake her up!"

"Why me?!"

"You're being rude to her for no reason!"

"Yeah! She took my room!"

"Micheal please! Your sharing! That girl has been through a lot, please just try to be understanding."

"I've been through a lot too!"

"That's enough Micheal. Go wake her up!"

Mike huffed and walked down the stairs. He flicked on the lights and looked at the mattress on the floor. No one was on there. "What the-" he went to the bathroom and opened the door. Again no one was there. "Mom? Shes not here!" Mike's eyes scanned his basement before he found Max in the for he made for El thee years ago. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THERE?!" He was furious. Mike stomped over and pulled the girl out forcefully, he didn't realize how scared she was. Nancy ran down the stairs and pulled Mike away from the

now crying girl. "Mike! What the fuck are you doing?!" Nancy hugged Max and tried to get her to stop crying.

The three were now sitting on the couch in the basement. "Mike apologize!"

"Why should I?! Shes the one ruining everything!"

"Mike! Please just apologize!"

"No!" And with that he went up the stairs. Nancy sighed and looked at Max, "I'm sorry Max. Hes just a teenage boy. Why don't you get dressed and come upstairs? I can make you pancakes if you'd like?" Max thought for a second before nodding. She went to the bathroom and changed. She wore black leggings, jean overalls, a small red jacket, and a long sleeve striped turtleneck. Her hair was down and she wore little mascara. Max walked out and smiled shyly at Nancy. "You look great let's go." Nancy walked up the stairs and Max followed behind. Mike rolled his eyes at the two girls and started to eat again.

"Good morning Max! Are you hungry," Karen asked smiling at the small redhead. Max shook her head and held onto her backpack tightly. Mike stopped eating and looked at her, "why don't you talk?" Karen looked at Mike with a glare. Max just smiled at him. "Okay well time for school! I can drive you if-" Mike interrupted his mom, "we can walk."

Mike walked to the garage, getting his bike with Max following close behind him. "You're not getting a ride, you realize that right?" Max nodded and got her skateboard from the ground. "Woah! You skate!?" The redhead smiled brightly and nodded. "C-can I see it?" She thought for a second before handing him the board. He held it in his hands carefully and looked at the stickers on the bottom. "This is really cool, Max." He handed it back to the girl whose face was as red as her hair.

The two rode to school quickly, and Mike quickly went to his friends. Max stood for a moment before going inside to find the office. "Is that Maxine?" Dustin asked as he watched the redhead walk into the school quietly. Mike rolled his eyes, "yeah. She didn't eat this

morning." Lucas looked at him with big eyes, "why not?" Mike shrugged and kissed El's cheek. El smiled sheepishly at him, "is she mean?" Mike shrugged again, "she doesn't talk."

"Why not?" Will asked in a quiet voice. "I have no idea," Mike placed his bike in the rack and locked it in. "We should help her." The whole group looked at Will like he was crazy. El shook her head, "I don't like her." Mike nodded, looking at his girlfriend.

The five kids sat in their favorite class, science with Mr. Clarke. The door opened to reveal the principal with a small redhead behind him. "New Student Mr. Clarke. Be careful with her." And with that, he left the room. Mr. Clarke smiled at the girl, "everyone this is Max. Max why don't you take a seat next to El?" The redhead nodded and looked around the room, wondering where El was. The burnette rolled her eyes and raised her hand. Max looked up and walked to the back, sitting next to the burnette. Mr. Clarke began teaching quickly.

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

3. Three ※

Max and Mike rode home quickly and quietly. "Hey Mom said we're sharing a room." Max nodded and hopped off her board. She place it in the garage and ran inside quickly. Mike watched her run and walked in. Even if he was being nice to her, he didn't like her. "Hey Mike! The rooms all set up, Max's in there now." Mike nodded taking a banana, "I'm gonna go to the arcade to meet up with the party."

"Oh Micheal can you take Max please?" He nearly dropped his banana. Mike turned back to his mom and shook his head. "Please Mike! She doesn't know anyone here and I'm worried about her!"

"No! I'm not letting her meet my friends! They don't even like her!"

"Micheal please."

He took one look at his pleading mothers face and sighed. "Fine! MAX COME DOWNSTAIRS!" Karen gasped and smacked him on the mouth, "stop it! She's afraid of yelling Mike! Don't do that to her." The two heard footsteps running down the stairs and sniffles. Max walked into the kitchen crying quietly. She looked up at the two, waiting to see what she has done wrong. Karen went to hug her and she flinched, backing up. The older woman put her arms down and sighed, "Max? Do you want to go to the arcade with Mike and his friends?" Max thought for a second before looking at Mike. She didn't want to upset him. He sighed and rolled his eyes, "she doesn't talk mom! Shes a freak!" Karen ignored him, "you can ride your skateboard there if you'd like?" Max nodded slowly which put a smile on Karen's face. Mike rolled his eyes once again before going to the garage. "I'm sorry about him sweetheart. Have a nice time and heres some money for you and Mike," she pulled out two bags worth of hundreds of coins. Max nodded and took the small bags, running to the garage.

The redhead tapped Mike on the shoulder. He turned around quickly and she flinched, thinking he was gonna hit her. She shakily held out the two bags. He gave her a small smile before taking one. She shook her head, still holding out the other one. He looked at her hands, they were so boney and they had scars everywhere. "No Max, that's

yours. I can't take it." She shook her head again and threw the bag into his hands. She got on her skateboard and started to skate away. "Shit!" He shoved the two bags into his pockets and started biking after her. "Max!"

The two made their way to the arcade. Mike put his bike in the bike rack and watched Max pick up her board. The party watched in annoyance as the girl fiddled with the wheels. Dustin was the first to speak up, "Mike can we have a word with you?" He eyed Max up and down, "alone." The raven haired boy nodded and walked away from Max. The group stopped walking and turned to him. "Okay what the hell Mike?!" He turned to Lucas and sighed.

"Listen I didn't want to bring her or want her to come. But, of course, mother of the year forced her to come. I don't think she wants to be here either."

Dustin rolled his eyes, "why is she so skinny?!" Mike shrugged again, "don't worry we can just avoid her in the arcade. I just need to make sure she doesn't run off." The rest of the party nodded as they walked back over to Max. She smiled shyly at them, trying to hide behind a few kids that were coming out of the arcade. Mike sighed and walked over to her. He grabbed her arm harshly, "I'm gonna hang out with my friends okay? Take your money and go play some games, don't leave the arcade without me and don't follow me. I'll come get you when it's time to go." He shoved the bag of money into her hands and let go of her. She nodded walking into the arcade quickly. Mike smiled back at his friends and held up a thumb.

It's been a good hour since the gang arrived at the arcade. Max had spent all her coins on dig dug while the rest had ran around the arcade like headless chicken. Forgetting what Mike had told her, she decided to go do some tricks on her board outside. The redhead had been riding and working on new tricks when a group of boys walked up to her. "Look! A girl on a skateboard!" Two of the boys laughed while the others crowded her. She looked around, hoping for a way to escape. To the poor girls luck, there was none. One of the boys took the board from her hand. She gasped and when to grab it when another boy grabbed her and held her back. "What you want it?" He waved it in her face and she nodded frantically. He smirked at her and snapped it on his knee, "here you go!" He threw it at her and

laughed. More people started to crowd around them. The redhead gasped as tears filled her blue eyes. The boy that was hold her, threw her to ground. She grabbed the two halves of her skateboard as tears started to silently roll down her cheeks. "Aw are you gonna cry now? Is the little lesbian gonna cry now?" He kicked dust into her face as everyone laughed. One of the boys grabbed her by her hair and smacked her across the face. The group took turns hitting the small girl.

"Dude we've been here for like two hours!" Dustin exclaimed, hitting the machine. "I'm well out of coins by now, what about you guys?" El looked in her pockets and found nothing in there. The rest of the boys shook their heads at Dustin, who swore his way out of the arcade. Mike looked down at his watch and sighed, "I should probably find Max and leave." El rolled her eyes and hugged the boy, kissing his cheek lightly. He blushed and smiled at her, "it's ok El."

He walked around the arcade quickly, looking for the small redhead. He didn't find her. Furrowing his eyebrows, he walked up to the counter. "Can I help you," Keith asked munching on his chips. Mike nodded, "I'm looking for a redhead. Do you know if she walked into the bathroom by any chance?" Keith thought for a moment before shaking his head, "I saw her at the dig dug machine a couple minutes ago. Some boys were watching her, you could see if they know where she went." Mike nodded before going back to his friends. Will looked at him and immediately noticed that he was stressing out. "Hey Mike what's wrong?"

"Max shes missing." El rolled her eyes at that. Mike sighed, looking at her. "I know El. But my moms gonna kill me!"

Lucas looked at him, dumbfounded. "How do you lose a girl with hair like hers?!" The taller boy shrugged, running a hand through his hair. "That's why I'm freaking out! I told her not to leave but of course she doesn't listen!" Lucas looked at the doors and noticed a crowd. He pointed at it, "Mike!"

The raven haired boy looked up and gasped before running out of the arcade, his friends following quickly.

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

4. Four ※

"What the-" the four kids looked at the crowd in front of them. Mike pushed past a bunch of kids, leading his group to the front. "Aw look the little gingers crying! How cute!" Upon hearing those words, Mike walked faster. He stopped at the image of Max sitting on the dirty street, holding her broken skateboard, bruised, and crying. He immediately ran over to her, pulling her in her arms. El looked at the boy with anger written on her face. She stomped over and smacked him, "are you crazy?! Who hits a little girl like that?! What the fuck?!" Mike walked away holding Max leaving El and Lucas to yell at everyone. He got on his bike and let Max sit on the back. "Its gonna be okay, I'm gonna get you home."

The two got gone twenty minutes later. Mike put his bike in the garage and walked inside with Max. He snuck her upstairs and called Nancy. She didn't answer so he went to her room to find no one there. "Shit!" The boy ran back to his room and sat next to the crying girl. Max was still holding the two broken halves of her board. She was looking down and whimpering. He knelt on the floor in front of her and lifted her chin with his finger. "Hey it's okay. You're safe now."

Max started to try to put the broken skateboard back together. She kept trying to fit the cracks in each other like a little kid trying to put a broken toy back together. Mike sighed and held her wrists lightly as if he was trying to calm down a small child. She still tried to put the broken board back together.

"Max it's broken."

"M-my board." She let the broken board fall from her hand and began to sob. Mike stood up and pulled her into a hug. She wrapped her arms around his torso tightly as her crying got worse. He pulled away from the hug quickly and knelt down again. "Max hey hey look at me, look right at me." He put his hand on her cheek and caressed it softly. "Breathe, in and out. Slowly. Good just in and out."

※ Max was four. She sat on the sidewalk, ice cream melting down her cone and her red hair flying in her face. Billy walked back to her and

chuckled, "hey ginger you're ice creams melting." He scared her! The small redhead gasped in shock and dropped her ice cream cone. Tears filled her bright blue eyes as she stared at the puddle on the floor. "B-Billy! You scared me and my ice cream!" A few tears escaped from her eyes as she clung to her older brothers leg. The blonde frowned and picked his sister up, placing her on his hip. She wrapped her arms around his neck as she cried into his shoulder. "Shh it's okay Maxie. It's okay! Hey Max look at me." She lifted her face from his shoulder and he smiled at her. "What If we go get you a new ice cream, hm? Would you like that." The small redhead thought for a second. She nodded her head, her red locks bouncing.

The two siblings walked to the ice cream truck and Billy bought her a new cone. She ate her new ice cream happily. Billy walked over to a bench and sat down, setting Max on his lap. He was only sixteen at the time and took care of a four year old better than his own parents did! If you could even call them parents. Neil was an abusive asshole who married a cheap whore thirteen years younger than him. He smiled as he watched Max eat her ice cream while holding her favorite stuffed animal. It was a small blue dog, her father won it for her at a fair before the acc- let's not get into that. It was so sticky and dirty now, Billy would have to wash it.

Max finished her ice cream and sighed happily. "I believe you owe me something Maxie," Billy said tickling the small girls sides. She giggled as she tried to get out of Billy's grip. "Billy stop! That tickles." She leaned back, letting her head rest on his chest. "That's the whole point silly! Now wheres my thank you?" He chuckled, holding her tightly. The small girl huffed and rolled her eyes playfully. "Thank you Billy, can I go play now?" The blonde sighed, looking ahead. There were a bunch of rowdy kids he didn't like, but he couldn't say no to Max. "Sure baby, go ahead. But stay close and don't talk to strangers." The small redhead hopped off of his lap and ran to go play.

Billy had been talking to this girl for thirty minutes now. He looked at his watch, realizing that him and Max were going to be late. "Hey it was nice talking to you, but I really have to go." The nice girl smiled at him, nodding. Billy ran to go find Max, only to see her squealing while riding a skateboard. "Max!" The small girl gasped as she looked at her brother. She lost her balance and went flying off the skateboard. One of the older kids, and Billy, ran to her. "Hey kid you okay," the older girl asked. Max

nodded her head, "I really like your toy. It's fun," she giggled. The older girl who owned the board smiled at her, "thanks kid. You're a natural." Max smiled at that. Billy picked Max up, "are you sure your okay Maxie?" The redhead nodded again, "do you think mommy will get me one?" The two sixteen year olds just laughed.

Max was now turning six. Billy was seventeen and driving around town like a maniac. He then remembered the girl he had exchanged numbers with. She was giving Max skateboarding lessons. He drove to her store, running in out of breath. The burnette girl, that was reading her magazine, jumped. "Billy! What's wrong?" Billy ran a hand through his hair, "it's Max's birthday. I forgot to get her something and now I have no idea what to get! Jayden you gotta help me." The girl, Jayden, put her magazine down and walked around the counter. "I'm gonna help you don't worry just chill. Okay what does she like?"

"Hates barbies, dresses, she loves digging tho. Should I get her a shovel." The two have been sitting for twenty minutes listening to Billy list off what Max likes and Max hates. "Slow down there cowboy. What if, and hear me out, you get her her own board?" Billy's eyes lit up, that was perfect! He nodded quickly as Jayden went to go pick out a board. She returned and started to work on it. She put neon orange wheeled on it, the tape, and stickers Max would like on the bottom. "Here ya go," she handed it to Billy. "How much?" Jayden shook her head, "don't worry! It's on the house, babys birthday today." The blonde hugged her tightly, "thank you. Okay well I gotta go pick up the cake and decorations. God knows that son of a bitch Susan hasn't done anything for her daughter." Jayden rubbed his shoulder. He looked at her, "will you come? She doesn't have any friends and I know it'll make her happy." Jayden held his face in her hands, "of course I'll come. Let's go find a box for this and go m'kay?"

Max sat at the table with her blue dog. A pout was present on her lips as tears filled her eyes. She hugged her dog close to her, "it's okay puppy. More cake for us." The small girl sniffled as she hopped off her chair and waddled to the kitchen. She found the cupcakes she made with her mother the night before and took them out. They were chocolate cupcakes with blue frosting. She quickly ate one, getting blue frosting all over her cheeks and button nose. She brushed her red hair out of her face as she climbed on the chair again. The front door opened and she gasped. "Billy?"

The two older teens walked into the kitchen. Billy chuckled at Max's face

as Jayden took a picture with her camera. "Maxie! You're a mess! What did you do to your face?" The redhead squealed as her older brother picked her up and spun her around. "Billy why don't you and Max go watch TV? I'll set up m'kay?" The blonde smiled at the other girl as he took Max to the living room. "Wait! I forgot puppy!" Max ran back as Jayden took the small blue dog off the table. She handed it to the small girl with a small bark. Max giggled as she ran back to her brother. Jayden smiled and started to decorate the room with blue, red, and yellow streamers. She set the wrapped present on the table. The wrapping paper was black with a sunflower pattern all over it. She opened the box of the cake and pulled out the beautiful decorated cake. It was a circular yellow cake. The flavor was chocolate, her favorite. It has beautiful sunflowers made out of frosting. The icing said 'happy birthday Maxie!' which was written in blue. She put a number six candle and lit it. She started to softly sing happy birthday while walking towards the living room.

Billy picked Max up and started to walk towards the kitchen, meeting Jayden in the middle. They both sang happy birthday, watching the girl smile. They finally finished and Billy lowered her a little to let her blow out the candles. "Happy birthday madmax," Jayden said kissing the girls cheek softly. She placed the cake on the table as Billy set Max down. The small redhead was babbling nonsense to her stuffed animal as the two teens watched, smiling. Max waited as if the toy was answering her. She then gasped, "you're right!" She looked up at her older brother, "Billy puppy told me I should ask if you got me anything." The blonde shook his head, chuckling. "Of course I did baby. You wanna go see what you got?" The girl squealed for what seemed like the millionth time today and nodded, bouncing on her feet. Jayden laughed as Billy scooped her up again and ran to the kitchen. She followed almost as fast.

He set Max on the chair and handed her a wrapped box. "Can I open it?" His heart melted as he saw her eyes fill up with excitement. The blonde nodded and Max started to rip at the pretty wrapping paper. She opened the box and gasped, "you got me one?! Thank you thank you thank you!" The girl hugged her brother tightly. Jayden watched smiling. "Only the best for my girl. Jayden helped too." The redhead looked at the girl and hugged her just as tight as she did Billy. ※

"My board." The girl croaked out again. Mike held her in a tight embrace, "hey its okay we can get you a new one? Let just throw this

one out m'kay?" He let go of her and went to go pick up the two peices. She started to scream out no and he stopped walking. "Okay okay we won't get rid of it okay? Let's just- we'll get you a new one."

Notes for the Chapter:

Do I smell character development? Theres a little of Max's back story. Don't worry you'll get a lot more of that sooner or later. Also Jayden is played by Shelby Simmons! She is my own character, just so you know ♡ also please comment I love hearing what you think about my fics

- A

5. Five ※

Mike woke up to the alarm beeping loudly. He looked around the room, noticing his empty bed. "What the-" he started to say when he noticed a small body next to him. He yelped in shock, falling off the bed. "What the fuck?!" He screeched, waking Max. She looked around, looking for her broken board. Mike quickly stood up, "what the fuck, Max?!" The tired girl looked up at him. He looked at the floor, noticing her board in two halves. "Right, we'll get you a new one today okay? Get ready we gotta get to school."

※ *"Maxie! Wake up sweetheart, it's your first day of kindergarten!" Billy said, shaking the tiny four year old. She opened her eyes, putting the cover back over her head. "Not now Biwwy." She said softly, sighing. He picked her up, walking over to the bathroom. "No! No potty! No need to go!" Billy chuckled, placing her on the ground. "You have to Maxie. Go potty and brush your teeth okay? I'll get your clothes ready baby doll."*

Billy picked out a baby pink dress, placing it on the bed. He picked out the cutest pair of blue sneakers, placing them next to the dress. "Billy! 'M done!"

He walked over to the bathroom, opening the door to see Max sitting on the ground. He scooped her up swiftly. "Did you go potty?"

She nodded proudly. "Did you wash your hands?" She rubbed her still wet hands all over his face. "Did you brush your teeth?" She opened her mouth and breathed in his face. "Good girl. I think you deserve some candy after school today." The small redhead gasped, nodding quickly. "Okay sweetheart. Just put on your dress and-"

"NOOOOO."

"Hey hey no yelling what's wrong baby?" He sat her down on the bed, kneeling in front of her. She pouted, crossing her arms over her chest. "No dress, I don't like it!"

"Baby doll-"

"Not wearing it."

"I know sweetheart but I haven't had time to do the laundry okay, please sweetheart just wear this and I'll get you ice cream later."

Her eyes lit up in excitement. "Promise?" She held out her pinky.

"I promise." He said, hooking their pinkies together. The blonde looked at his watch and gasped. He pulled his shirt off quickly, running out of the room to get himself changed.

"Maxie baby come on we gotta go!" He said knocking on her door. "I'm in the wivingoom!" Billy walked to the livingroom, laughing as soon as he saw her. Her bright red hair was messy, she had over ten bracelets covering her arms, a necklace her and Billy made out of beads, his shirt, and her mom's heels. She also had managed to get lipstick everywhere but her lips. "Maxie! What happened to the pretty dress I gave you?"

"Yuckie!"

He picked her up, tossing her in the air carefully. She squealed, holding onto her blue dog for dear life. "Biwwy!"

"Come on you silly let's go get you cleaned up." ※

"Max! We gotta go!"

The redhead got up quickly, throwing on a yellow hoodie with jeans. She wanted to hide as much as possible. "That's it! I'm leaving you can walk!" The door slammed, causing the girl to jump. She pulled out a picture from under her pillow, hugging it tightly. "Where are you?" She whispered quietly. Max pit the picture down and grabbed her bag, running out of the house.

She finally arrived at school, missing first hour. Max went to her locker, putting her things in while looking at her schedule. '2nd hour: P.E.' Okay great she has her uniform with her. The bell rang, causing her to jump. Students filled the hallway, crowding. Max closed her ears while walking to the locker room. Loud noises weren't really her thing.

"Mike I have to get to class!"

"Okay Okay but just one moreeee."

"Okay Mr. Whiny pants." She giggled kissing his cheek lightly. The brunette smirked, walking to her next class. She walked over to her locker, getting her P.E. things.

El walked into the locker room, noticing every spot was taken. She spotted an open spot and walked to it. There was a familiar redhead next to her. Rolling her eyes, she began to change. Once she finished, she noticed Max staring at her. "You got a problem?" The small redhead shook her head and took off her shirt slowly. El couldn't help but notice how skinny she was. Every part of her body softened.

She then felt herself become angry upon seeing all the girls scars. From big to small, new to old. How could anyone let this happen to someone so young, so small. It reminded her of her time in the lab. How she grew up with no love for twelve years. Then Hopper adopted her and she finally had love, she was comfortable and happy. Now she felt bad. This girl had just come from God knows where without any love, then her and the party made it worse. She winced remembering how tightly Mike had held her arm at the arcade, or when she was on the floor. She looked so broken, so scared. It wasn't fair. These girls did nothing to deserve what happened to them. They went through abuse for years, no one helping them, no one saving them. So yeah, it wasn't fair.

"Max?" El put her hand on her arm

The blue-eyed girl backed up into the wall, hugging herself. The brunette took her hand back, "Hey it's okay. I'm not gonna hurt you, I promise." Max nodded, walking past her into the gym. El sighed following her, but making no attempt to talk to her again.

The five kids sat at the lunch table. The boys talking about their latest D&D campaign. El was staring at the ginger who was looking for a place to sit. She tapped Mike's shoulder. He turned around, nodding for her to go on. "How come she isn't eating?" She nudged her

chin to the entrance of the lunch room. Mike looked over for a second before turning back to El. "Dunno, don't care."

"Does she eat at home?"

"No, why?"

"I saw her, in the locker room. She doesn't look good Mike. Her ribs and bones stick out."

"Why do you care?"

She turned to Lucas, "Excuse me?"

"I mean you never seemed to care before, so why now?"

He was right. Why did she care? It's not like they're friends.

"I don't- I don't know. I just I guess she just- she-"

"El are you okay," Will was now looking at her.

"She reminds me of when I first escaped from the lab. Doesn't talk, and barley eats."

"She eats." Mike looked at El concerned, trying to make her feel better.

El's head snapped towards Mike, "what does she eat?"

"I um- f-food."

"Sure." And with that, she walked away.

6. Six ※

El walked up to her. The girl looked up, fear evident in her eyes. "Hi, I'm El." The brunette said, holding her hand out. Max flinched and scooted backwards. "Hey hey don't worry, I'm not gonna hurt you I promise." The redhead nodded and shook her hand gently. El smiled, sitting next to the girl. "I really like your shoes," she said looking at the girls worn out, yellow high top converse. Max smiled brightly, a light blush painting her face. El liked Max's smile, it was warm.

The two girls talked, or El talked and Max listened, until the bell rang. Max jumped slightly, El noticed and cursed out the bell in her head. "Hey I'll walk you to class." The ginger smiled softly, getting up from her spot on the ground. El followed quickly, linking their arms together. She took the schedule from Max's hands and smiled. "Okay we have history! Hey why don't you sit next to me today?"

Max thought for a second, causing El to think she didn't want to sit with her. "You don't have to if you don't want to." Max shook her head, smiling brightly at the brunette. El returned the smile with a small, "okay great! Let's go so we won't be late."

They walked into the room and quickly took the two open seats next to each other. Twenty minutes into their class, El ripped out a paper. She quickly scribbled on it and folded it, passing it to Max. The ginger opened it, smiling softly when she read what was inside. She quickly wrote something and passed it back to El. The brunette opened it, her heart doing a flip.

Do you want to come over today?

Was what she had written in neat, small handwriting.

Of course!

Was what Max had written back in messy, big writing, like a child would.

Max was waiting by the entrance, eager to go to her new friends house. Should she tell Mike where she's going? Nah, it'll be fine. El quickly walked over to Max, slipping her hand in hers. Her face lit up when Max didn't flinch at her touch. A police car pulled up and El tugged Max with her towards the car.

"Dad!"

Hopper wanted to cry right then and there. Even though El had been calling him dad now, it still made him tear up every time he heard her say it.

"Hey kiddo, you ready to go? Oh who's this?"

"Dad this is Max, can she come over?"

"Of course, come on you two lets go get you girls some food."

7. Seven ※

Jim bought the two girls food, then drove home to his cabin. El led Max through the woods, showing her the tripwire Hopper had made when he found her. The two stepped over the wire, walking into the house. Hopper followed them inside making sure they washed their hands before sitting down at the small table. El and Hopper started to eat while Max just stared at her food as if it was going to eat her. "Hey kid you okay?" Hopper asked, putting a fork in his mac and cheese. Max looked up at him nodding and picking up her fork. The father and daughter stared at her as she slowly picked at her macaroni. She looked up again and the two started looking anywhere else. Max looked back down at her plate and brought the fork up to her mouth, taking a small bite. El smiled brightly before returning back to her meal, continuously checking if Max was eating.

While Max was in the bathroom, El decided to call Mike.

"Hello?"

"Can I talk to Mike?"

"Oh hi El, just one second please."

She heard Karen yell something, then angry footsteps coming to the phone.

"Max if that's you I'm going to send you back to fucking cal-"

"Mike, it's El. Is it okay if Max spends the night?"

"She's with you?"

"Yes. She didn't tell you?"

"Uh I don't know if you've noticed, El, but she doesn't talk."

"Right."

"We thought the- I- Will was so worried El, I couldn't-

"I know. I'm sorry I should've told you guys. Tell Will not to worry, I closed the gate. Nothing's going to hurt us ever again."

"If anything happens-

"You'll be the first to know."

"I can't lose you, El. Not again."

"And you won't. I'm not going anywhere, not now, not ever. Now can she sleep-over?"

"Give me a second," there was faint yelling. "Yeah, my mom said she can stay over."

"Okay, she'll be home tomorrow."

"I love you."

"I love you too, I gotta go now."

"Bye," El hung the phone up. Max was standing in the kitchen awkwardly. "Oh! You finished, here let's go to my room." Max slightly flinched at El's loud voice. The brunette took the other girl's hand softly, leading her to her room. She closed the door behind them as Max touched the blanket with curious fingers. "You cold?" El asked, turning on the radio. The ginger shook her head, swaying her hips to the music. El smiled, "do you like to dance?"

Max looked up with a big smile and nodded. The brunette grabbed her hands and started spinning them. The two started to dance crazily. When the song ended, the two flopped on the bed laughing. Once the laughter died down, El took a good look at Max. She noticed the thousands of adorable freckles, the pink rosy cheeks, the way her beautiful ocean eyes lit up when she was enjoying herself. There were so many things about this girl that El thought she would fall right then and there. "Hey, you look pretty tired. What if I get you some clothes and you can go to sleep?" She thought for a second before nodding tiredly. El smiled softly and left to go get her some pajamas.

When El returned, Max was already asleep. She sighed getting the girl out of her clothes, wincing at every bruise and scar. She noticed some of them were self-inflicted and felt her heart ache at the thought of this girl harming herself. Once Max was fully clothed, she tucked the smaller girl in, planting a light kiss to her forehead. El walked to the door, turning off the lights, then closing the door.

"Hey dad, could you do a search for Maxine Mayfield?"

"Yeah of course, is that her?"

"I just wanna know what she went through. Maybe the boys and I could be a little easier on her."

"I'll get you a full report by the end of the week."

"Thanks dad," El turned to go back to her room.

"El?"

"Yeah dad?"

"Take care of her, god knows what the poor girls been through."

8. Eight ※

Notes for the Chapter:

Trigger warning! Mentions of rape and Sexual Assault

FYI! I cried writing this chapter, so have fun with that information! :)

It's been about a week since El had found out what Max had gone through. Hopper had given her a full report.

Name: Maxine Mayfield

Age: 13 years old

Birthday: April 16th, 1971

Parents: Susan Hargrove, Neil Hargrove, Sam Mayfield

Height: 5'2

H/C: Red

E/C: Blue

Max was born in 1971

In 1974 the first domestic abuse call was made

In 1976 CPS visited for the first time, nothing was found

In 1978 19 year old Billy Hargrove and Jayden Williams ran away

In 1979 the second domestic abuse call was made

In 1979 the third domestic abuse call was made

In 1980 Susan Hargrove committed suicide

In 1981 the fourth domestic abuse call was made

In 1981 the fifth domestic abuse call was made

In 1981 the sixth domestic abuse call was made

In 1981 CPS visited for the second time, nothing was found

In 1981 Max visited the hospital for: broken arm (L), a sprained ankle (R), black eye, concussion, bruised ribcage, and non-consensual sex

In 1981 CPS visited for the third time, nothing was found

In 1982 Max had spread rumors to her teachers, claiming she had been beaten and raped by her step-father

In 1982 CPS visited for the fourth time, nothing was found

In 1982 Max had ran away to find Billy

In 1982 Neil Hargrove passed away in a car accident

In 1982 Max was sent to live with her only living relative, Maya Mayfield, her grandmother

In 1982 Maya passed away from a heart attack

In 1983 Max was sent to foster care

In 1983 Max was adopted by a single man

In 1983 Max ran away to the police, claiming her foster parent had raped her

In 1983 Max was put in an adoption center

In 1984 Max was sent to the center in Hawkins, Indiana , after her fifth fight

In 1984 Max was adopted by Karen and Ted Wheeler

El had shown the boys the report, deciding to be nice to the girl

El had shown the boys the report, deciding to be nice to the girl. They hadn't fully accepted her as their friend yet, which was

understandable concerning the circumstances. Mike didn't want her to get hurt if those things ever came back.

The six of them were in English. Max was doodling in her notebook when the teacher called on her. The girl looked up, scared out of her mind. "Mrs-"

"Micheal, I did not call on you!"

Max looked from El to Mike to Dustin, Will, Lucas, the teacher, then back to Mike. Her mouth opened and closed. Shes never felt so exposed before. Everyone was staring at her.

"What cat caught caught your tounge, dyke?"

Everyone laughed.

"Come on fire crotch! What you got stage fright?"

"Troy Harrington! That is enough! Max please read."

"I don't think sh-"

"Shut up Troy!"

"What're you gonna do frog face?"

"Enough Troy, you starting to go after traumatized kids now?"

"Woulda look at that, midnight wants a go!"

"You wanna get your arm broken again?"

The bell rang, stopping Troy from answering. Max ran out of the room.

Max was in the 'playground' riding the new skateboard Hopper had gotten her when Troy came up to her. "What do we have here? Fire crotch is riding a skateboard! What a joke!" Troy pushed her against the wall. He held her arms above her head tightly with one hand. With the other, he touched her waist.

The redhead whimper, turning her head away from him. He licked her neck, "girls are ment to stay quiet and service Men." Troy kissed her sloppily, "you are supposed to cook for me." He squeezed one of her breasts. "You are supposed to have my children." Troy kissed her lips again, "you are not supposed to skateboard." He stuck his hand down her front, "you ar-"

Troy tumbled to the floor. "THAT'S MY SISTER YOU PIECE OF SHIT!" Mike got on top on the boy and started swing at him. El ran over to the crying girl, helping her calm down. Will ran inside to find a teacher while Dustin cheered Mike on. Lucas was trying to pry Mike off the helpless boy. Mr. Clarke and Will came rushing out. He pulled Mike off Troy, holding him back while James held Troy back. A crowd had formed around them, watching the scene unfold.

"TOUCH **MY SISTER** EVER AGAIN AND I'LL KILL YOU! YA HEAR ME YOU SON OF A BITCH, I'LL KILL YOU!"

El and Will led Max away while Mike yelled at Troy. Lucas was holding her board for her, keeping it safe.

Max was upstairs in her and Mike's room playing on the atari. The five party members were in the basement talking.

"All in favor of letting Max join the party, say I!"

"I"

"I"

"I"

"Mike, it's four against five."

"Five against zero."

Al of them grinned at each other, running up the stairs. They all pushed each other out of the way to try and be the first to tell Max. Mike rolled down the stairs causing Will to be the first one to the room. He made a gesture for everyone to stay back and softly

knocked on the door. Max appeared two seconds later.

"Hi Max!" He said with a happy smile, "we voted and decided your in the party!"

Max looked confused at that.

"Oh well we play d&d and because of that we call ourselves the party. The five of us all have different classes, I'm the Cleric, Mike's the Paladin, El's the mage, Lucas is the ranger, and Dustin's our bard! I don't think there is any classes left but we can figu-"

"Zoomer."

"What?"

"She can be our zoomer."

"But Mike that isn't even-"

"Shut up Lucas, now it is. She's fast on her board!"

"Okay Zoomer, so what'd ya say Max? Wanna be our friend?"

Max thought for a second before breaking out in a smile, nodding her head. The boys whooped as El grabbed Max's hand dragging her to the basement. The game was already set up. Everyone started to teach her to play. They all ended up passing out around 12, Karen smiling once she saw the scene.

※ *Billy stared at the sleeping Max who was hugging her blue dog. He walked over to her, stroking her cheek softly. "Hey baby, wake up. I need to tell you something," he whispered softly to her. Max's eyes opened and she smiled at seeing her brother. "Billy!" She whispered, wrapping her arms around his neck. He smiled softly, wrapping his arms around her thin waist, giving her a tight hug. The two pulled away and Billy sat on one knee. "I uh," he held her small hand in his, "I wanted to give you something." He said, his voice breaking against his will. "What is it?" She asked curiously. Billy took off his necklace and put it on her, "that way I'll always be with you. No matter what," he said caressing her cheek. Tears filled his eyes as he looked at her for possibly the last time ever. "H-hey Maxie?"*

"Yeah?"

"I love you, baby."

"I love you too! But stop calling me a baby! I'm not a baby anymore!"

Billy chuckled, wiping his tears. "You always gonna be my baby girl."

*"Why're you crying?" She asked, putting her small hands on his cheeks. Billy smiled, looking down as he placed his hand on hers. "Nothing baby doll, I'm just sad my little girls growing up!" He said booping her nose. "I **always** be you baby doll!" She giggled, mocking him.*

Billy smiled sadly before kissing her on the nose. "I love you Maxie, I always will. Never forget that, okay? Promise me you won't forget." He said as more tears flowed down his cheeks. Max linked their pinkys.

"I promise Billy."

He stood up, kissing her head again. The blonde tucked her in, biting his lip to stop himself from sobbing. "Goodbye Max."

"You don't say goodbye, silly, you say goodnight!" She giggled, hugging her blue dog." Billy chuckled sadly, "Yeah your right smart girl. I forgot!"

"Maybe it's all the hair-dye."

Billy tickled her sides, laughing when she squealed. "Okay Okay! I'm sorry! Stop it, stop it please!" She laughed, God he was going to miss that laugh. Billy stopped tickling her, kissing her forehead for the last time. "I love you, I gotta go now. Go to sleep baby, you have school tomorrow," he said not even bothering to wipe the tears anymore. Max smiled at him, rolling over and cuddling with her blue dog. Billy whimpered, closing the door. He quickly ran to his car, checking in the back seat if all his bags were there before hurriedly driving off. He stopped at an empty field, waiting for Jayden. He let out a loud sob, hitting the steering wheel with his hands multiple times. Goodbye Max. ※

※ Susan smiled at her husband who was holding their daughter on her stomach, spinning around. "Weeeee! Mommy! Mommy wook I'm fwying!" She yelled giggling. Her hands were out like an airplane. In one hand, was her blue dog that her dad had just won for her. "I see that my baby, what

are you gonna name your doggy princess?" Susan asked smiling. "Puppy!"

"That's very creative bunny! I like it."

"Thank you daddy!"

"Now what does my bunny say about getting ice cream then going to watch a movie?"

"Bunny say: yummy!"

Susan laughed at her daughters silliness. "What does mommy say bunny?" Max looked over at Susan, "mommy?"

"Mommy says: anything bunny wants, bunny gets. It's bunny's birthday!"

"CAKE!"

"Yes bunny, we're gonna have cake at your party tomorrow!"

The three got in the car. Sam began to drive as Max babbled to her dog. Sam watched through the small mirror, smiling. "Sam! Sam eyes on the road! SAM!"

"Breaking news, on the highway to Los Angeles, there was a car accident. A family of three. There were only two survivors, twenty nine year old Susan Mayfield and three year old Maxine Mayfield, we pray for this poor family." ※

9. Nine ※

Notes for the Chapter:

FYI! Maya is portrayed by Annette O'Toole! She played the older version of Beverly in the 1990 IT and Topangas mom in one of the episodes of boy meets world.

Trigger warning! Mentions of rape and sexual assault!

● Billy, Neil, Susan, Maya, Sam, El, Dustin, Lucas, Mike, and Will all stood in front of Max. She was sitting in a chair, tied up. "Let me go!" She screamed, trying to wiggle out of the restrains. Susan was the first to walk up to her. She planted a loud smack on Max's cheek. "You're dirty, letting men touch you. Why couldn't you be normal you fucking slut?! I wanted a daughter, a normal daughter! Not some lesbian that doesn't know how to act!"

There was a loud bang and Susan was on the floor. She reached towards Max, "MOM!"

"Help me, bunny." She was then dragged away.

Neil was up next, smirking happily. "I'm not sorry for what I did to you, I'm just sorry that our fun had to end so soon." He kissed the corner of Max's mouth, causing her to gag with disgust. He too was shot, but Max didn't care about him.

Maya stood in front of the small girl with a smile on her face. "Grandma..." Max whispered, her heart aching. "Hi baby girl, grandma misses you."

"I miss you too," the small girl cried, tears rolling down her cheeks. Maya fell to floor, bleeding pooling around her. Sam came next. He was holding a stuffed bunny.

"Daddy!"

"It was all your fault Maxie, all yours!"

"No! No daddy please, I-"

"I love you darling."

"NO PLEASE!" Max was sobbing now. Her dad was soft the dragged away, just like everyone else.

Billy walked up to the girl, getting on one knee in front of her. "I left because of you, its all your fault Max. All your fault. Your mom, Neil, your dad, your grandma, me, now your new friends. Everyone around you dies, I hate you. I never loved you, you pathetic excuse for a human," he said yanking his necklace off her neck. Max sobbed loudly as her brother was shot and dragged away. The five kids walked up to her, all screaming different things.

"Dyke!"

"You deserve to die!"

"I hate you!"

"I wish my parents never adopted you!"

"You deserve everything that's happened to you!"

"Stop."

She bit her lip. Everyone was all talking at once. Her ears were ringing, she couldn't breathe. They kept getting louder and louder. Max shut her eyes, praying everything would just...

stop

She opened her eyes to see all her friends dead. Max let out a loud sob, she was surrounded by bodies. Her friends, family. Everyone she's ever cared about all dead, because of her.

"WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?!" She cried loudly.

"We want to show you all the destruction you've caused."

"No, no, I- NO I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING! I DIDN't do anything," she sobbed, her voice breaking at the end.

Twenty hands grabbed at her, pulling her in different directions. She could feel her skin tearing, blood seep-

"No!" She sobbed, shooting up from her bed. Max sobbed loudly, hugging her blue dog close to her. Mike fell from his bed, rushing to turn on the lights. Nancy ran in, rushing over to the traumatized girl and wrapped her in a hug. "Mike, go get water. Please," Mike nodded running down the stairs quickly.

When he got back upstairs, Nancy was talking to Max softly. He decided to eavesdrop.

"Did you have a nightmare?"

Max nodded.

"Do you wanna tell me what its about?"

Max made a gun gesture, then put her finger nails on her forehead, pulling them as if she were ripping her skin apart.

"That seems scary, but hey guess what, no one can hurt you anymore. You're safe with us, Mike and I, we're gonna do everything in our power to protect you sweetie."

Mike thinks Nancy should be a therapist. God knows they all need one after the events of '83 and October.

Max laid down, Nancy laying next to her. She laid her head on Nancy's chest, holding her dog close to her. She fell asleep soon after Nancy started stroking her hair. Mike walked in, smiling sadly at the scene before returning to his bed and falling asleep.

Notes for the Chapter:

10. Ten ※

Notes for the Chapter:

So ya'll know how Tinkerbell doesn't talk in like Peter pan right? She acts out what she wants to say. That's Max in this chapter, but 10x cuter.

El rang the doorbell to the Wheeler household. She was bouncing slightly, waiting for someone to open the door. Karen opened it, smiling brightly when she saw El. "El! Hi, how are you sweetie?"

"I-im good, how're you?"

"I'm good I'm good, you want me to get Mike?"

"No actually, I was wondering if Max could spend the night at my house?"

"Hmm, I think some female interaction would be good for her. Let me ask her real quick, Max! Could you come down here please?"

Max walked down the stairs, nodding at Karen. "El's here, she's wondering if you wanted to have a sleepover at her house. Do you wanna go?" She asked, softly petting the girls hair. Max nodded and smiled the brightest smile Karen had ever seen on her. "Okay well go pack your pajamas and go get your clothes, Hopper know about this?"

"Yes."

El watched as the redhead ran up the stairs excitedly. Her heart skipped a beat when she realized Max was excited to hang out with her. *No El you have Mike that's wrong!*

Max came back down the stairs with a bag. She had her pajamas, hair brush, clothes for the next day, toothbrush, and in her hand was her blue dog. "You ready to go?" Karen asked her. Max nodded, eager to leave. "Okay are you two walking?" El nodded at her. "Yeah I didn't think we could both fit on the bike," she lied. El wanted to walk with her and enjoy the summer air. "Okay, bye girls! Have fun!" Max

walked out the door, closing it behind her. *She* grabbed Els hand and started walking.

El was ecstatic, Max was never one for being so touchy touchy, but here she was holding her hand! "Wow you really wanna leave huh?" El said giggling. Max nodded, rolling her eyes dramatically and sighing as loud as she possibly can.

"You were that bored? Mike wasn't home?"

Max shook her head, making a gesture that she was playing an arcade game.

"Ohhhh, he went to the arcade! Do you know if the boys are there too?"

Max nodded, pretending to knock on a door and acting as the boys being crazy, as always. El giggled at her.

"Dustin came? Oh God, did he get yelled at? God knows that boy can't control his swearing."

Max nodded laughing. She started acting like Ted yelling at Dustin for being 'inappropriate'. El held her stomach as she laughed hard. Once the two stopped laughing, El noticed the blue dog in the gingers hand.

"Hey, is that yours?" She asked looking at the stuffed toy. Max looked down at the toy she was gripping tightly. She nodded, opening her mouth. "Y-yeah my dad, he wo-won it for me at the fair." Els jaw dropped. She had never heard the girl talk, like ever. "You can talk?!"

Max smiled slightly, "y-yeah. I just d-don't talk as much anymore."

"Why not? You have a soothing voice." Did she really just say that? God, how stupid!

"Nothing's interesting," she shrugged.

"You know that's not true, tell me about your dog."

"Well my dad won him for me on my third birthday at the fair."

"Where's your dad?"

"O-oh he's uh he's dead."

Dumbass! El winced, "oh god Max, I- I'm so sorry I didn't me-"

"Don't worry, it's okay. I haven't talked about him in so long," she chuckled sadly.

"Do you wanna talk about him?"

"He was the best, him and my mom were so in love. They were so happy together, always sharing these gross kisses." She laughed at the memory, whipping her tears. "Every time he came home from work he had presents for us. I still have some of the jewelry he got my mom, well what I saved. It isn't much."

"Is that one of the necklaces he got her?" El asked pointing to her neck.

"What? Oh no," Max smiled holding the pendant in between her pointer finger and thumb. "This was Billy's."

"Who's Billy?"

"He's my brother. Was? I don't know, he left me."

El knew all of this, she had read Max's report. "Was he nice?"

"He was the best brother I could ever ask for. Don't tell Mike."

El giggled, intertwining their fingers. She swung their hands back and forth softly. "I wont."

"He was more of a mom than my actual mom was. Don't get me wrong I love my mom and everything, its just. After my dad she became quiet. I tried to help, but it never worked. Then she met Neil and well I-"

"What happened to her?"

"She killed herself."

"Max I'm-"

"Don't"

"What?"

"Don't apologize. It's pity and I **don't** need pity."

El couldn't speak, she was surprised.

"H-how'd you learn to skate?" She asked cautiously.

"Billy and I we were at the park. He scared me and made me drop my ice cream. He bought me a new one then I asked to go play. He let me, telling me not to talk to strangers. I didn't listen though. I saw this girl, Jayden. They started dating after my sixth birthday. God I hope they're okay. Anyway, she was skateboarding and I just thought it was the coolest thing ever! I walked up to her and asked if I could play with it. She let me and I rode it. It was so relaxing. Wind in your face, feeling as though your flying, freedom. It didn't last long though and I fell off. Billy was asking if I was okay but all I could think about was how free I felt. My sixth birthday him and Jayden bought me one. "

El smiled at the way Max's face lit up when she was talking about her brother. "How'd you get his necklace?" Max instantly frowned and El thought she asked the wrong thing. "You don-"

"No no its okay. I haven't talked about him in years, its nice."

Point goes to El!

"I was seven, I think? He came to my room one night, he seemed fine. Now looking back at it, he was crying and saying 'I love you' a lot. He was telling me to never forget him, that he'll always be with me. He gave me his necklace to prove his point. The necklace was his moms so I'm surprised he gave it to me."

"What happened to his mom?"

"She left him with his dad. Hey! Guess its an old family tradition! He said goodbye instead of goodnight, I didn't understand why he did

that at all. But now- now I finally get it. He was my best friend, I trusted him with my life, my heart. He crushed it with his bare hands. No matter how much I want to hate him, I can't. He took care of me no matter what he had going on. He could've gone out partying, or gone out with his friends. He always put me first. Always. He took care of me when I was sick, when I had a nightmare, when someone was bullying me. He was always there, El. I miss him, I miss him so much," Max was crying now.

El was staring at the girl, tears clouding her vision. She pulled Max into a tight hug, letting the girl cry into her shoulder.

"Hey Max?"

"Hmm?"

The two girls were laying in Els bed, Max resting her head on Els shoulder.

"I'm proud of you."

"For what?"

"Talking, I know it must've been hard."

Max had the brightest smile ever and El would go back to the lab all over again just to see that smile one more time.

11. Eleven ※

Notes for the Chapter:

I just realized I never told you guys when this takes place in. Okay so its November 1984, after El closed the gate in season 2 but before the snowball. Season 3 hasn't happened yet and I have a very good reason for that. For all my Mileven and Lumax babies, I'm sorry but your not getting your iconic snowball kisses. Everything that happened in season 2 is the same, except the whole Max, Billy, Neil, and Susan plot. The episode in the gym, El saw Mike but decided not to get caught and go back home. Steve was never beaten up by Billy. The snowball hasn't happened, yet, but once Joyce found out El was alive an with Hopper she forced Hop to enroll El in school immediately which is why she's in school now. I think that's everything! Sorry if I confused anyone, I literally confused myself tho.

"Mike! Max! Breakfast!"

Mike and Max ran downstairs, everyone watching as Max ate. Ted chuckled, "slow down now, don't want you to choke."

Max nodded, slowing down. Mike smiled watching his sister finally eat. "Max do you want orange juice?"

The redhead shook her head, "c-can I have c-chocolate milk please?"

Everyone stared at her in shock. Karen smiled, "of course you can!"

"T-thanks mom."

Karen cried after they left.

"Who can tell me the answer?"

Max raised her hand. Everyone, except for Mike and El, looked at her surprised. "29?"

The teacher looked at her book and nodded, "yeah your right." Most of the students started whispering. Max just stared at the board, smiling proudly. The party looked at each other and started writing notes to each other, El saying Max talked the other day with her and Mike saying she only talked once when they beat her up and today at breakfast. Max looked over at El giving her a big smile with a thumbs up. El's heart swooned.

Max sat down at the lunch with her tray. Food was piled on it, pizza, an apple, blue jello, a pudding cup that was for Dustin, a chocolate chip cookie, and a small carton of chocolate milk. Everyone at the table passed their pudding to the curly haired boy. He grinned, opening one and stabbing it with his spoon. "Hey guys, I was thinking that we could all go to the arcade after school today?" Lucas asked, picking at his gross pineapples with his fork. Everyone said yes and started talking about all the different games they're gonna play. Max lightly tapped Mike on the arm. He nodded at her.

"C-can I come?" She asked in a small whisper.

Mike smiled softly, "of course you can. Here let me see if everyone's okay with it. Hey guys, Max over here wants to know if she could come with us. The four members of the party stared at her before saying yes. "Hey new girl," Lucas smiled, "your in the party okay? You don't have to ask, we're your friends weather you like it or not."

Max smiled sheepishly, "you guys are fun." The five kids looked at each other, smiling happily. Everyone just called them weird, or nerds, or losers, or freaks. No one has ever told them that they were fun.

They watched as Max finished her food then announced that she had to go to wash her hands. The kids cuddled in close, talking in an almost whisper. "Should we tell her?"

"No, I don't want her to. What if those things come back? I don't want

her getting hurt!"

"Mike, I closed the gate. Nothing will happen, and if it does I'll protect you guys! Like always! I've saved your asses and the world twice, never even got a thank you by the way."

"Thanks El, but I agree with Mike. Telling more people could risk our lives and theirs!"

"Dustin, I have superpowers for crying out loud! What's the worst that could happen?" // Author: Max is that you?//

Max walked back to the table, "hey! Did ya miss me?"

"You know it," El grinned. Max blushed, smiling. El made her so comfortable. Like she could be herself around her.

The party were in Mike's basement. Max was sitting on one side while the others were in front of her. "So are we going?"

"Max we need to te-"

"Kids! Come upstairs! The new neighbors here!"

The five looked at each other confused before running up the stairs. Max huffed, rolling her eyes. "Thanks guys! I really appreciate it." She grumbled while walking up the stairs. "You know, its really ru-" She stopped when she saw the man standing at the front door. Tears rushed to her eyes as she brought a hand to her mouth.

"Max?"

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

12. Twelve ※

Max's tears became angry as she marched up to the man, slapping him across the face.

"Max!" Karen and Mike yelled.

"How could you! I- you- you suppose to be dead."

"I'm sorry baby, I wanted to-"

"Why did you leave me?"

Max and the man cried while everyone watched in confusion.

"Max, you were seven! You had friends, if I took you we would've gotten in so much trouble! I missed you so much, oh god Max I'm so sorry." He wrapped her in a hug, crying into her head. "You're so tall honey," the two laughed through these tears. "You think I'll be taller than you soon?"

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves now."

"Max, honey, who is this?"

Max pulled away from him and wiped her tears away. "Mom," Karen wanted to cry again, "this is Billy. He's my older brother, but you could ask anyone in Cali and they'll tell you he's my dad."

Mike felt a pain in his chest. Her brother. But he was her brother, some some random man that left her.

"Mom?"

"Yeah, Billy um they adopted me."

"What happened to Susan? And Neil?"

"We need to talk."

Everyone listened as Max told her story. El was holding onto her shoulder the whole time, rubbing her back when she needed to take a breather. Mike was holding her hand, because HE was her brother. Billy cried the whole time, wanting to kill the dead man, and her foster dad. Karen sobbed, thanking the gods that Max was safe with them now. Dustin threw up, Lucas stared in shock, and Will felt as though he understood her.

"Mike? Can you get Max some water?"

"Sure El, I'll be right back."

Mike walked to the kitchen, more like ran.

"El, can we go outside?" Max whispered to the brunette. "Of course, anything you need darling. Hey we're just gonna step outside for a bit, fresh air."

The girls walked outside, Max sitting in the grass. El sat next to her and started playing with her fingers. "You okay?"

"He's alive."

"He is."

"I always thought that it was me, that it was my fault. Everyone I've ever loved died. I thought Billy did too and promised myself I would never love anyone ever again. But he's here and he's alive. His necklace, the pendant has a saying. 'L'amour est une bénédiction, mais aussi une malédiction' it's French for 'Love is a blessing, but also a curse'."

"That's a beautiful saying Maxie."

"Why didn't he want me? Why did he leave me? Did I do something wrong?"

"You, you were perfect Max. I left because of Neil, I couldn't take it anymore."

Both girls turned around as Billy walked closer to them. "You were my baby, I love you so much Max, but I couldn't have you. I had to

leave to save myself. Now looking back I wish I took you with us, god we could've been a family. Me, you, and Jayden."

"Jayden, what-"

"We got into a car accident last month. She died, I'm sorry." Max bit her lip as tears pooled in her eyes. "I'm sorry too, I know how much you loved her."

"We were engaged, she beautiful."

"Will you stay this time?"

"I'm not leaving ever again."

"Promise?"

Billy linked their pinkys, "promise." Max smiled, kissing his hand. She got up, "I'm gonna go see what's up with Mike. He looks jealous? I don't know." She looked back inside. El got up to follow her when Billy stopped her.

"El right?"

"Hi," El said shyly. Billy pulled out the ring from his pocket. "You like my sister?" El was shocked. she never classified it as a crush, just getting upset when Max was upset, wanting to protect her forever, wanting to live together in a little cottage and wear cute dresses, and have picnics, to dance with her, okay maybe she hears it now. "Um, I don't-"

"It's okay to be confused, don't worry. I just see the way you look at her. Take this, and if it isn't Max, I want you to give it to someone you love one day." He said placing Jaydens engagement ring in the palm of her hand. "Billy-"

"Your a good person El, thank you for taking care her."

He walked back inside.

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

13. Thirteen ※

The six kids sat in the basement while Karen and Billy baked cookies upstairs.

"What did you guys wanna tell me?"

The five kids looked at each other before spilling everything. From Will going missing, to El and her powers, to the lab, the upside down, the demogorgon, El disappearing, Will returning, Hop hiding El in the woods for a year, Dart, the demo-dogs, the shadow monster, Will getting possessed, and El closing the gate. Max stared at them in disbelief, arms crossed over her chest.

"Yeah okay, there's no way any of that's real."

"But it is!"

"Sure, I'm not stupid. You guys seriously expect me to believe that?"

"Yes!"

"Where's your proof?"

"Excuse me?"

"Come on show me your silly little powers! Oh wait you don't have any because your- WOAH!"

El raised Max up in the air like she had done with Mike at the quarry. Max started breaking heavily, scared out of her mind. "You believe us now?" Mike said with a smirk.

"Put me down!" El slowly lowered Max to the floor, wiping the blood from her nose. "Cool right?"

"The coolest! My best friend has powers!" Best friend, ouch. "But you can't tell anyone okay? It could get us killed!"

"Who would I tell? Can we go to the arcade now."

"God Max have you ever been to the doctor to see if you have ADHD?"

"Shut up, maybe mom can take us."

"Yeah."

"Hey Mike can I talk to you?"

"Yeah of course, you guys go we'll be right there!" The four kids walked into the arcade while Mike and El stayed behind.

"What's up?"

"Mike we need to break up."

"What why?"

"I don't like you anymore..."

"Who?"

"What?"

"Who do you like now? Who is he?"

"Mike-"

"I'm gonna bash his face in."

"Mike-"

"Who is he-"

"MIKE! It's not a boy!"

"What?"

"It's a girl! I like girls," she said crying. Mike wrapped her in a hug. "It's okay, it's okay El." El nodded, sobbing in her chest.

"I'm not mad at you, I could never be mad at you."

"Thank you."

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

14. Fourteen ※

Notes for the Chapter:

Trigger warning! Slurs!

Max was playing hopscotch with Will when a girl from her class came up to them. "Look! It's the mute and Zombie boy! Well she isn't really mute anymore, she talks too much!" Max looked down and Will put his arm around her shoulder. The rest of the party walked up to them. "Come on mute, talk!"

"Hey! Don't you dare talk about the like that!"

"Sorry El, didn't know you two were dykes."

El looked down defeated. Max looked at with a sad look, then she saw red. "Hey Stacey!" The girl, Stacey, turned around. Max walked up to her, punching her right in the nose.

"MAX!"

Stacey looked up from her spot on the floor, holding her now bleeding nose. "You bitch!" She stood up and pushed Max to the floor. The blonde got on top of her, choking her while repeatedly slamming her head into the ground. Max could feel her brain shaking around. There was a crowd around them, chanting 'fight.' The Party was screaming at Stacey to get off of her.

"I'll show you what a dyke can do," Max kicked her leg up, hitting Stacey right on her private area. The girl moaned in pain, her grip becoming loose. Max grabbed her arm and flipped them over. She punched Stacey in the eye. Stacey yelped as she scratched Max across the cheek, ripping off her skin.

Max let out a loud laugh, "that's all you can do?! Come on Stacey! I was abused all my life for Christ's sake, I can take it!" Stacey yelled again when Max punched her on her cheek. She yanked Max's hair, hard.

"Max stop! Stop!" Mike yelled, pulling Max off of her. Mr. Clarke ran

over, sending both girls to the office and nurse.

"Max! Honey, oh my God what happened!"

"Mom, dad, I'm s-sorry. P-please don't send me back." Max was sobbing as she pressed an ice pack to her bandaged cheek. Karen sat next to her, wrapping her in a hug. "We would never do that to you sweetheart."

"How did this happen?"

"Stacey she was being mean to me then called me and El dykes. I didn't care but El, she looked so heart broken. I got suspended, I'm sorry."

"She did what now?"

Karen was holding Max as Ted was using some very... colorful words at the principal.

"Ted-"

"Max be honest with me, are you gay?"

"Ted! You d-"

"No its okay mom, yeah I am. Is that a problem?"

"Good, good. As long as I don't have to worry about any boys and I can still interrogate people I'm fine."

Max had the biggest smile ever, even after she got checked at the hospital, got ice cream, got yelled at by Billy, gotten a lecture from Billy Karen and Ted, and gotten checked over once more by Billy. She still had a smile on her face because her new dad loves her for who she is.

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

15. Fifteen ※

Notes for the Chapter:

So I know this is the 80s or whatever but stay with me here. I hated Max and Els outfits. SO Millie's dress is the one she wore for an interview I think Sadie's wearing an outfit from like a season 2 interview

Bc miss Sadie Sink in a suit is a whole queen move.

Flyers littered the school walls. In the lunchroom, hallways, even in the bathrooms! They all said the same thing, 'snowball December 15th.' Tomorrow. The party had different thoughts about it. El was excited, Will was too, Mike, Lucas, and Dustin didn't care, and Max had just learnt what the snowball was. "So we have to wear dresses?"

"I mean, yeah! But you-"

"Ughhhh."

"What's wrong with dresses?"

"I absolutely hate them, my mom would always force me to wear them. Always got back at her by playing in the mud."

"Well thank God there's no mud at the snowball."

"Are there drinks? And food?"

"Obviously."

"Okay, okay I think I can work with what I have."

The redhead sat back on her seat with a smirk on her face, crossing her arms over her chest. The bell rang and the kids got up to go to class. El held Max's hand, stopping her from leaving. "El? You okay?" The boys had already left and it was just the two of them. "Hey, I have a quick question for you." Max sat back down.

"What's up?"

"D-do y-y-yo- god I've never done this before."

"What's going on, El? you're kinda freaking me out."

"Do you wanna go to the snowball with me?" Only too see if I like you.

If you told Max she was blushing, she would've punched you in the face.

"Yeah! I mean, who wouldn't want to go to the dance with their best friend?" Ooh friend zoned, ouch.

"N-no I mean um yeah, that'll be fun." She tried to smile through her hurt. Max stood up and bent down to kiss her cheek, "better save me a slow dance Hopper!" She gave her a salute then ran out of the lunch room just as the second bell rang, leaving El all alone. "Best friend," she whispered holding the cheek Max had kissed.

"Mike! Where's-"

"It would be so much easier if you just wore a goddamn dress Max!"

"I will shove the stupid dress up your a-"

"What is all this yelling?!" Karen asked as she walked into the room. "Hey! You guys should've been ready!" Max rolled her eyes, huffing. "Mom, do you know where my blazer is? The one we bought yesterday?" Karen thought for a second before nodding, "it's in my room! I wanted to get all the wrinkles out so it would be perfect for today, let me go get it for you."

Max was wearing a white, silky, button-up blouse with black jean like pants that had a design made with buttons. She had on black vegan-leather doc martins. Around her shoulders hung a black blazer. she had pulled her hair back into a half up half down style with a scrunchie with tails, also known as a hair scarf that was a light grey color with white polka dots. Nancy had put light pink lipstick on her, which she secretly wiped away.

"Oh my babies look amazing!" Karen cried as she took another picture. Billy smiled with tears in his eyes. "You look amazing baby doll," he said kissing the top of Max's head. "Okay mom, I think that's enough pictures!"

"Just one more, Mike."

Both Mike and Max groaned. You could've mistaken them for twins if Max didn't have red hair.

"Okay okay, come on you two, we have to go!"

Max gasped as she watched El walk in. The brunette was wearing an off the shoulder, white dress. It had a skirt that poofed out just above the knee. Around her breast area, the white had black ruffles around the edges. There was a small triangle cut out on her lower torso was a small triangle cut out that was covered by the black ruffles. She had on white heels and bright red lipstick. Her short hair was down in beach waves. She looked like a goddess. Max looked down at her outfit and became self-conscious. Mike was right, maybe she should've worn a dress. But her legs were too thin, she would look like a skeleton. Max wrapped her arms around herself becoming uncomfortable in her own skin. Nancy, Billy, Jonathan (who she assumed was Nancy's boyfriend), and Steve (someone she had not met yet) were all chaperoning. Nancy had told Jonathan and Steve to look out for her. So, whenever she got uncomfortable, all she had to do was say the word and she would be home in no time.

El walked up to the party, a small smile displayed on her red lips, the same lips Max felt herself wanting to touch. "Hey! Max you look amazing," she would've blamed the blush on the lights. "T-thanks, El, so do you." God, why did her legs feel like jelly? El smiled, grapping a small white daisy from her bag and placing it in Max's hair. Max silently cursed herself for wiping the lipstick off. The girl smiled before walking to the snack table. Max let out a breath she didn't know she was holding as she poured herself punch. "You okay?" Max jumped, gripping onto the cup tightly. "Woah, didn't mean to scare you." She looked up and saw a boy that was around Nancy's age with big poofy hair. She wondered if a bird laid an egg in their. To be

honest, it kind of looked like Dustins hair, just a little more tamed.

"Do I know you?"

"Oh right, I'm Steve." Ah so that's the famous Steve. "You look like you've just seen a ghost."

"Not a ghost, an angel."

"Ah, crushing are we?"

"No, just confused."

"You need- hey El!"

El waved at Steve and grabbed Max's hand. "Max! Come on we have to dance, I love this song!" Steve grabbed the cup out of her hand before El dragged her away. Max looked back at Steve, giving him a salute.

The whole party was on the dance floor, laughing as they watched each others crazy dances. At one point, Max fell against El from laughing too hard. Both girls could feel their hearts beating. After all the fun songs a slow song came on. Max was about to go sit down when El pulled her back. She placed her hands around Max's waist, smiling at the slightly shorter girl. Max wrapped her arms around El's neck, pulling her close. She could smell the vanilla perfume El had used. "Hey."

"Hey," Max replied as she slowly swayed.

"You okay?"

"Yeah, why wouldn't I be?"

"You seem distant tonight?"

"Just tired is all, don't worry."

"You sure?"

"Positive."

"You know you can tell me anything, right?"

"Yeah, I know."

"Okay, okay good."

Max just faked her smile the rest of the night.

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

16. Sixteen ※

It had been almost three weeks since the dance. The kids had gone on break right after that, spending every chance they get with each other. El noticed that Max had been distant. She wouldn't hang out with them and always ignored her. El was worried she had done something wrong at the dance. The party had slept over, Max didn't join. She stayed in her room the whole time. El stared at the wrapped gift on her dresser sadly. Max was still ignoring her, so, Mike had dropped off her Christmas gift. To say El was hurt would be an understatement. She wanted to exchange gifts with Max and see her reaction to what she had gotten her. The brunette hadn't even opened the gift Max had gotten her! Suddenly, an idea popped into El's head. She jumped up from her bed, throwing on clothes.

She put on her winter gear and grabbed both presents, running to the front door.

"Where you goin' kid?"

"Max's, need to see her."

"It's about to snow."

"Don't care."

"Wanna tell me what this is about?"

"Nope, gotta go."

"Let me drive you."

"Bye Hop!"

El biked to the Wheeler house like her life depended on it. She dropped her bike, panting harshly. The presents were safe in her bag. She rang the doorbell twice before Billy answered it. She became confused, was she not at the right house?

"Hey El! Oh god it's freezing out there, come in!"

He pushed open the door, allowing her to come in. The wheelers were sitting at the table frosting cookies. Max looked up, her smile dropping when she saw El.

"Hi honey, we were just frosting cookies! Do you want some hot chocolate?" El ignored Karen, knowing its rude but she'd apologize later. She grabbed Max's hand, pulling her upstairs.

"El! Let go of me!"

"We need to talk."

"No we don't, why're you here?"

"You have some nerve, Wheeler. We had fun at the dance. We were okay, why did you ignore me for three weeks?!"

"That's none of your business. Get-"

"It is if your hurting me!"

"I hurt you?"

"I thought I did something wrong Max! No one has heard from you in weeks, you made Mike give everyone your gifts! So what now? You're just leaving the party? Leaving me? After everything we told you?! We trusted you, we could've gotten killed! I TRUSTED you Max! What am I suppose to do? Please tell me, I hate feeling like this!"

Both girls were crying by the end of Els speech. They were both in pain.

"I'm not good for you," Max whispered.

"What?"

"I said I'm not good for you."

"You DO NOT get to decide what's good for me. I want you in my life, Max, I care about you! But you're making it so hard to show you. Stop pushing me away!"

Max tackled El with a tight hug, "I'm sorry."

The brunette was just happy to be in her embrace again. "Let's open some presents."

If you didn't know, El was in love with Cinderella. So, Max had gotten her a replica of the glass slipper. El had gotten Max a small skateboard necklace that had 'MadMax' engraved in the back of it. Karen had told Hopper that El was sleeping over since both girls fell asleep cuddled up on the couch watching soap operas. No one had the heart to wake them up.

Notes for the Chapter:

I hate this chapter

- A

17. Seventeen ※

Notes for the Chapter:

Ya'll are gonna hate me. ♡

It's now June. Dustin would be coming back from camp soon and the whole party was excited to go to the new mall every single day. When Dustin got back, however, he broke off and hung out with Steve at scoops. Will, Lucas, and Mike had played d&d in the basement. Max and El were all over town. At the cabin, the wheelers, Billy's house, and the mall. Billy had gotten a job at the public pool. He was suppose to take someone out on a date but Max hadn't asked yet.

Something Max noticed was that Billy and Will were acting weird. The whole group was, until they finally told her what was going on. They were talking about the upside down. She hadn't told anyone Billy was acting weird until now. They had El spy on him, seeing him doing something to Heather. Max quickly explained it could've been happy screams which everyone asked what happy screams were. She ignored it and they planned to test him.

And that's how we got here, Billy being locked in the hot Sauna. Max was staring at her brother, trying to be as strong as she can. He was banging on the door, begging to be let out. Max was holding onto Mike's arm, crying into his shoulder.

"Let him out," she whispered. Will went and put the heat up. Max sobbed into her brother's arm. "Max," she looked up at where the voice came from. Billy looked at her for a second before falling to the ground wailing.

"We're at 220."

"It's not my fault Max, it's not may fault." The crying girl walked up to the door. She watched her brother crumble to the floor. "What's not your fault Billy?"

"He made me do it."

"Who?"

"I don't know it's like a shadow."

"Billy I want to help you."

"It's not my fault, please believe me Max."

The two siblings sobbed, being separated by the door. She turned back to her friends, "let him out!" She saw Will whisper something to Mike. Max turned back to Billy before being tackled to the ground. "LUCAS! LET GO OF ME!"

No one wanted her to see what was going to happen next. Lucas held her back as Billy burst the door open. Max was left sobbing as Billy choked El. He stared right at her as he did it. Mike hit Billy on the head with a metal rod. Lucas held her as she screamed.

After El had saved Mike once again, she ran over to the redhead that was now on the floor sobbing. Her head was resting on Lucas's lap. The two teens looked at each other before looking back down at Max. "H-hes all I have left! Don't take him too."

Weather or not that was entirely true, he was the one who took care of her for seven years. They could all understand where she was coming from. Will walked over to the three teens huddled together. He stroked Max's hair. "We're gonna save him, I promise you Max. We're gonna do everything in our power to keep him alive. We would never, ever wanna take him away from you."

Mike's heart hurt for his sister. She had been through so much and she could possibly be losing the last piece she had. Whatever happened, he was going to be there for her. Every step of the way.

"El?"

"Yeah?"

El was braiding Max's hair, waiting for the girl to go to sleep. "Please don't hurt him."

"I wouldn't ever think about it!"

"I need him."

"I know you do Maxie."

"I can't lose him."

"And you won't."

"Okay, we can sleep now."

Max laid down, resting her head on El's arm. El played with Max's hair, getting out her wonder woman comic from the bedside table. "Thank you for showing me this, she's so cool!"

"She's like you."

"Really? How?"

"Well she's super cool and a total badass! She doesn't need a man to tell her what to do."

"Bitchin'."

"Bitchin' huh, I like that!"

El smiled before she started to softly read to her. The redhead felt her eyes droop before she fell asleep in El's tight embrace.

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

18. Eighteen ※

Notes for the Chapter:

f you get the little scene I added I love u

"I'm sorry," he breathe out.

"Billy! Please get up, I'll help you. Please I need you, please!" She sobbed, practically laying on top of him.

"Max-"

"YOU PROMISED ME! HE'S GONE! HES gone," she cried harder, coughing as El lifted her onto her lap.

"It's okay, it's okay. You're okay Maxie, your okay," she whispered kissing the top of Max's head. Mike sat watching his sister break down. "Guys we have to go!" Steve yelled as the rest of the group, now including Robin and Erica, ran down the escalators. For once, it's not the Byers house! Max shook her head, holding onto Billy's body. "We can still save him! Please, help me."

"Max we have to go!"

"We can help him, please! I n-need him."

Steve picked Max up, dragging her away from her brothers body. The redhead started to scream breaking Everyone's hearts. She held onto the door, trying to force her way out of Steve's grip and run back to her brother. "Max, Max stop! He's gone, he gone. Okay? We have to go or we're gonna be gone too." She nodded tearily, letting go of the door. Steve carried her outside, letting the paramedics take her. He then went over to an ambulance himself.

Robin sat next to Max who was icing her now forming bruise. "Hey Wheeler, you alright?"

"I just lost my brother right in front of me, what do you think?"

"Right, sorry. Listen I'm new to this whole monster, upside down shit

but I hope I can be of some help."

"So am I," Max mumbled.

"What? Oh shit, you're-"

"Nancy's adopted sister? Yeah, I haven't even been here a full year and a stupid fucking monster appears out of nowhere and I have no idea how to deal with it." Max watched as Hopper and El reunited. The way Jonathan checked over Will to make sure he was okay, or how Lucas was holding Erica on his lap even though she was already asleep. How Mike and Nancy were so close, forgetting about her. How Steve and Dustin acted more like brothers than friends. She felt so out of place. Everyone had someone while she just lost the most important person in her life. "It isn't fair."

"What isn't fair little red?"

"Please don't tell me that's gonna stick."

"Already makin' t-shirts!"

The two girls laughed sadly as Max rested her head on the other girls shoulder. "Robin right?"

"You remembered my name?"

"Yeah, its badass."

"Like you."

"And you. I mean who can crack a Russian code?!"

"Apparently me, now. Can add Russian to my many other languages."

"What languages do you know?"

"French, Italian, Spanish, and pig Latin."

"I can talk in French."

"Oh variment?" *//Oh really?//*

"Oui!" //Yes!//

"Est-ce tout ce que vous pouvez dire?" //Is that all you can say?//

"Non, j'ai appris quand j'avais neuf ans, C'est le langage de l'amour!" //No, I learned when I was nine. It's the language of love!//

"C'est, hé pourquoi cela ne peut-il pas être notre petit secret? Chaque fois que vous avez besoin de me dire quelque chose de privé, vous le dites en français?" //It is, hey why can't this be our little secret? Anytime you need to tell me something private you say it in french?//

"J'aimerais ça. Alors toi et Steve hein?" //I'd like that. So you and Steve huh?//

"Nous sommes juste amis." //We're just friends.//

"Comment ça se fait, il est cool!" //How come, hes cool!//

"Je suis gay." //I'm gay.//

"Oh même!" //Oh, same!//

The two girls just laughed. Max finally had someone to call her own. She finally fit in.

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

19. Nineteen ※

Notes for the Chapter:

Trigger warning! Self harm

Mike rapidly knocked on Hoppers door. El opened it, surprised to see him. "Mike? What're you-"

"Max! She's missing, she's been missing since that night El. I thought she just wanted to be alone and at Billy's house but s-she isn't there. She's gone and I can't find her! Please, she's my little sister. I can't believe I lost her! HOPPER!"

"Mike, Mike calm down. We're gonna find her, Hops at the station. Go get everyone, I'll try to find her." Mike nodded, running back out as fast as possible. El sighed getting her bike. She knew exactly where Max was.

"Mike's worried about you, ya know?"

"I don't care."

"We all are, it's been five days Max."

"I said I don't care, go away."

"Max, we want to h-"

"It's too late."

"Max please-"

"You promised El. Get away from me."

"No!"

"What did you say?"

"I said no, I'm not leaving."

"If you wanna die, be my guess."

"Are you smoking?"

"So what if I am?"

"Max you could-"

"Die? I know."

"What is up with you?!"

"You wanna know what's wrong with me? Everyone I've ever loved is dead! My mom killed herself, my fault. My grandma's dead, my fault. Jayden died because she and Billy ran away, my fault. B-billy died? My fault. It's all my fault."

"It's not your fault Max."

"Yes it is! It should've been me."

"W-what?"

"I deserve it, I deserve it all. All the pain, abuse, I deserve it because I kill people. It's all my fault." She said scratching open some one the healing scabs on her wrist. Blood trickled down to the tips of her fingers.

"Max you're bleeding..."

"I deserve it."

"No, you don't." El grabbed Max's arm and pulled up her sleeve. She gasped seeing all the cuts littering her arm. The brunette pulled Max onto her lap. "Max-"

"Leave it," she said yanking her arm back. El took her cigarette and mushed it on the floor, putting it out. "HEY!" Max stood up angrily. El stood up, too, staring into her blue eyes. "I can't fucking believe you! Do you know how much that was?!"

"Why are you acting like this?!"

"Because of you!"

"Me?"

"You have Hopper, Mike has Nancy, Will had Jonathan, Dustin has Steve, Lucas and Erica have each other! I have no one!"

"Bu-"

"It should've been me."

"Max don't say that!" El pulled the other girl into a tight hug. Max wrapped her arms around El's waist, sobbing into her shoulder. She pulled the brunette to the floor with her. El held Max while she cried.

"We're gonna get you help, its gonna be okay. I promise."

Max looked up at her. She felt this warm feeling in her chest, then in her stomach. They were like butterflies. Shit. Max pushed El off her, ignoring the concerned look she got. The redhead skated down the hill, wiping her tears at the sound of her best friend desperately calling her name.

She skated to the now familiar house and burst through the door.

"Max whats-"

"I like El!"

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

20. Twenty ※

"Woah, you're gay?"

She just noticed Dustin and Steve sitting on the couch. "Shit!" She yelled, throwing her board.

"Max! Viens ici, ça va. Ils ne jugeront pas." *//Max! Come here, it's okay. They won't judge.//*

The ginger nodded, sitting on one of the arm chairs in the Buckley house.

"Que s'est-il passé?" *//What happened?//*

"Nous étions assis à ou sur ce qui restait de starcourt et elle a découvert... quelque chose et elle m'a juste aidé pendant que je pleurais et je l'ai juste senti dans ma poitrine et mon ventre et c'est tellement faux! C'est mes frères Ex!" *//We were sitting at or on what was left of starcourt and she found out about.. something and she just heled me while I cried and I just felt it in my chest and stomach and this is so wrong! She's my brothers Ex!//*

"What the hell are you two saying?!"

The two girls looked at Dustin. "None of your business!" They said in unison. Steve held his hands up in surrender. Robin took Max's hands in hers.

"C'est bien! Maintenant, nous pouvons vous réunir tous les deux!" *//This is great! Now we can get you two together!//*

"Quelle? NON! Robin, elle est hétéro! Honnêtement, à quel point ce serait étrange si votre ami venait vers vous et vous disait simplement " hé! Je suis amoureux de vous! C'est un plan stupide. Plan stupide et stupide qui va faire chier! Dieu, tu es pire que Dustin!" *//What? NO! Robin, she's straight! Honestly, how weird would it be if your friend came up to you and just said 'hey! I'm in love with you!' It's a stupid plan. Stupid, stupid plan thats gonna go to shit! God, you're worse than Dustin!//*

"Uh, I heard my name!"

"Steve l'a fait. Qu'est-ce qui pourrait mal se passer?" //Steve did it. What could go wrong?//

"Oh je ne sais pas, peut-être qu'elle est hétéro ET homophobe? Je perdrais mon meilleur ami puis Mike serait en colère contre moi et le dirait à ses parents et je serais viré!" //Oh I don't know, maybe shes straight AND homophobic? I'd lose my best friend then Mike would be mad at me and tell his parents and I'd get kicked out!//

"Ce sont aussi tes parents, Max. Et même s'ils vous ont expulsé, vous nous aurez toujours. Allez-y, quel est le pire qui puisse arriver?" //They're your parents too, Max. And even if they did kick you out, you'll always have us. Just go for it, whats the worst that could happen?//

"Tout pourrait exploser dans mon visage et je pourrais perdre la seule bonne chose que j'ai dans ma vie. J'ai déjà perdu Billy, je ne peux pas perdre El aussi." //Everything could blow up in my face and I could lose the only good thing I have in my life. I already lost Billy, I can't lose El too. //

"Et vous ne le ferez pas, je vous le promets! Allez-y un peu de rouge." //And you won't, I promise! Just go for it little red.//

"Je dois y aller, maman veut m'aider à planifier les funérailles de Billy." //I gotta go, Mom wants to help me plan Billy's funeral.//

"D'accord, et Max parle d'abord à Mike." //Okay, and Max talk to Mike first.//

Max nodded, grabbing her board and running home. Robin turned to face the boys.

"What the fuck just happened?!"

"Was that Russian?"

"Oh my God shut up!"

Max pushed open the door and ran inside. She tackled someone that was in the way and ended up on top of them on the floor. The mystery person put their arms around her waist, holding her tight.

"Max?!"

"Mike? Shit I didn't mean to bump into you."

"More like tackle me!"

He set her on the floor next to him as he stood up brushing himself off. Max stood up, grabbing his hand, and forcefully dragging him to their room.

"What the- what are you doing?!"

"We need to talk." She pushed open the bedroom door and pointed to his bed. He sat down, looking up at her. "Oh god you're so tall now."

"Well first of all I'm gay."

"Congra-"

"I like El."

Mike stood up at this. Max walked backwards into a wall, thinking he was going to hit her. "El? My ex El?"

"Yeah... I'm sorry I didn't me."

Mike sighed, rubbing the side of his face. Max flinched, closing her eyes tightly. Her breathing got faster. She turned her head to the side, preparing to get smacked.

The tall boy sat back down on the bed holding his head in his hands. Max slowly opened her eyes and let out a breath she didn't know she was holding. She walked over to him, taking small baby steps. "You okay?"

"Yeah yeah, you know she broke up with me?"

Max sat next to her brother, rubbing his shoulder soothingly. "Really?"

Why?"

"She likes a girl."

Her heart stopped, she was too late. El likes someone else. "Oh," she whispered looking down.

"Yeah, oh. Max..."

"No it was stupid anyway! I mean how could she like me? Right? I mean, look at me!" She chuckled through her tears. Mike turned to look at her, but she quickly turned her head so he couldn't see her crying. She sniffled, taking her hand away from his shoulder. The ginger got up, holding onto her board tightly. "Well, I should uh probably go clean out Billy's house so we could sell it." She said wiping her eyes with the back of her hand.

"Max-"

She was out of the house by the time he could say another word. Max sobbed the whole time she was at Billy's.

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

21. Twenty-one ※

Nancy clipped Max's hair back. "You ready?" the shorter girl shook her head, holding her necklace tightly. Nancy sighed and kissed the top of Max's head. "I know, I'm sorry."

※ *Max stood in front of the mirror, playing with the hem of her dress. She was four years old and going to her grandpas funeral. Susan and Neil weren't in town this week. Billy knocked on the door softly. "You ready to go baby doll?" Max nodded as Billy grabbed her hand. "Billy?"*

"Hm?"

"Where did he go?"

Billy sighed. How were you supposed to explain death to a four year old? He sat down on the bed, pulling her onto his lap. "Well, there's this place called Heaven. I like to call it paradise. You can be whoever you want there and no one can judge you for anything."

"Really?"

"Yeah!"

"Can we go now?"

"Not yet baby."

"Why not?"

"Because its reserved for good people after they die."

"Is daddy there?"

"Of course he is!"

"Do you think he remembers me?"

"Of course he does baby girl! Who could ever forget you?"

"Mommy could, she does it all the time!"

He had no idea what to say to that. "Yeah well mommy's not gonna go to paradise."

"She's not?"

"No, she isn't."

"Will you go?"

"I don't think so baby doll."

"Will I go?"

"Well that depends on you." ※

Max sat next to Mike in the car. He looked at her as she slipped her hand in his. The ginger was looking out the window the whole ride.

Nancy looked at them when they got to the cemetery. "You two ready?" Both siblings turned to Max, waiting for her answer. She turned to face them and gave them a small smile. "Yeah, I'm ready."

They walked over to the priest and their friends. Everyone hugged Max tightly. She just smiled. There was a skinny blonde woman sitting in a chair. Max frowned in confusion, walking over to her. She sat next to the women. "Hi, I'm Max. I'm sorry, I've never seen you before. Did you know Billy?"

"He was my son."

"O-oh."

"My baby boy, in a casket."

"Never thought you would out-live him huh?"

The blonde smiled sadly. "I didn't."

Max nodded, looking at the open casket. "He was the best brother I could ever ask for."

"Your Susan's kid?"

"Yeah. How'd you know her name?"

"Oh, she talks very highly of you."

Max let out a soft laugh. The blonde turned to her. "What's so funny?"

She looked at Billy's mom. "She's been dead for years now. She-"

"Max!" The ginger looked up to see her best friend walking over to them. "What're you doing over her?" El asked, a small smile present on her lips. Max turned to the blonde once again. "This is El, Billy sa-"

"Max? Who are you talking to?"

She looked up again. "What?"

"There's no one there? Who're you talking too?"

"Billy's mom?"

El made a confused face. "Max, Billy's mom died last year?"

"What? No she didn't she's ri-"

Max turned her head again to see no one there. El held her hand lovingly, "hey. I understand, it's a sad day. Why don't we just get this over with and go home? We can watch whatever you want. We could even have a sleepover if you'd like?" The ginger smiled tightly, standing up. "Yeah, I'd like that."

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

22. Twenty-two ※

It's now September and the kids are back in school. Karen had basically forced Max to see the guidance counselor and a therapist every week outside of school. She was put on medication to 'help her get better'. She just says it's all a bunch of bullshit. They're all sugar pills to make her think she was getting better, but she still takes them before school and before bed. Well, not reluctantly. Mike and Nancy force her in the morning, Lucas and Will force her during lunch, and El forces her at night. She's been sleeping over there since the funeral. El just... wanted to keep an eye on her.

That's how we got here. Max was sitting in El's lap, watching the movie. El was braiding her hair, trying to get all the knots out without hurting the girl. Hopper walked into the living room. "Girls, it's twelve in the morning! Please shut that off and go to sleep!" He groaned, leaning on the doorway. El and Max looked at each other giggling before running off to El's room. "Goddamn it! Why did I decide to adopt a teenage girl?"

Max laid awake at three a.m. She groaned, sitting up. El looked over at her. "Can't sleep either?" She asked the ginger. Max shook her head, taking the blanket off and swinging her legs over the side of the bed. The girl let out a soft sigh. El sat up and crawled next to her, sitting on her knees. "You okay?"

"Why'd you break up with Mike?"

"What?"

"He told me you liked someone. A girl, and I just- you know- I"

"Max, what else did he tell you?"

"That's it!"

"You promise?"

"I swear, El."

The brunette let out a shaky breath. Max turned to her best friend,

"hey you okay?"

"No, yes, maybe. UGH!"

"Hey, what's going on?"

"Max I need to tell you something."

"What's up El?"

"I think I like... WILL!"

"You like Will? Isn't Hop dating Joyce tho?"

"H-hey why don't we go get ice cream?"

The two girls snuck to the kitchen. Max hopped up on the counter as El gave her a pint of strawberry ice cream and a spoon. The girl smiled happily as she ate her ice cream. El smirked as an idea popped into her head.

"Hey can I have some?"

Max nodded excitedly, getting a spoonful for El to enjoy. She was about to feed it to the brunette when she felt a pair of lips slam onto hers. She kissed back, not wanting it to go away. She then felt a tongue lick at her lips. Max opened her mouth allowing El to taste the inside of her mouth. She put her arms around the other girls neck, making out with her. El held onto Max's waist. She broke the quickly, allowing them both to breathe before she went right back in. Her hands snaked around Max's waist as they kissed each other lovingly. She pulled away, resting her head on Max's forehead. "Jump," she whispered panting. Max looked up, reconnecting their lips as she wrapped her legs around El's waist. El picked the girl up, walking back to her bedroom. She set Max on the bed, breaking the kiss as she started to undress.

The brunette stared at Max with a new shyness in her eyes. Max was in awe at the other girls body. "Like what ya see?"

"Get over here and do your worst Hopper."

And that's exactly what El did.

Max was breathing heavily as she laid her head on Els chest. She lightly bit one of the other girls breasts, pulling a soft moan out of her. Max giggled, pulling away. Both girls were naked, sweaty, and sticky. "We need a shower."

"Later, sleepy."

"Elll warm, clean water."

"Nappy time!"

"I'm gross!"

"We both did some... very interesting things and your saying your gross now?"

"I-"

"Later, need my baby." El said, tightening her girl on Max's wait. She kissed the top of her head before sighing happily. "I really like you Max."

"I really like you too El."

"What do we do now?"

"We see wherever life takes us."

"Do you want to be my-"

"YES!"

"Shhh you silly, okay girlfriends."

"Girlfriends."

"Okay good."

"Yeah, good."

The two laid there in each others embrace. Girlfriends, what a new thing for two very scared girls. Who knew where life would take them.

"Now shower?"

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

23. Twenty-three ※

Notes for the Chapter:

Trigger warning! Self Harm

Also theres this song Hold me while you wait by Lewis Capaldi I recommend listening to it while reading this chapter. I'll tell you guys when to play it

Max hopped off her skateboard, holding tightly onto it. Her, Mike, and El waited for the boys. El was bouncing on her heels. Mike chuckled at her.

"You okay there?"

"We're in high school!"

"We sure are."

"This is gonna determine the rest of our lives!"

"Or it's just high school?"

El turned to her. "You don't wanna go?"

"Not really, no. Middle school was stupid enough, now I have to deal with three years of this."

"Four."

"Sorry?"

"There's four years of high school, Max"

"Nope!" She went to leave when Mike pulled her into a hug. "Don't worry, we won't let anything bad happen to you." She smiled at her brother. He pulled El into the hug and kissed both the girls on their heads. "You too, El. We need to protect our girls." Max pulled away from him and fake gagged. "Gross! Now I have to bleach my hair!"

"You love me."

"That I do."

"Would that take out the orange?"

She started to feel off during second period. Third period was even worse. It was art, the whole groups favorite class. She was painting a little girl who had blue eyes and red hair. The girl was hiding in a corner. Her skin was all different shades of blues and purples. There was a shadow of a tall man holding a bat in his right hand. The body of a much older woman laid on the floor in front of the smaller girl. Her face had been bashed in and she was stabbed in the chest. It was a horrifying painting for a girl her age. El was sitting next to her silently humming as she painted a beautiful galaxy. She looked over at Max's painting and frowned. "Max..."

"It's nothing!" She hid the painting.

"Are you okay?"

"DON'T ask me that!"

"I-"

Max looked around. The teacher came over and took the painting into her hands. max stood up, reaching for it. The older woman held it out of her reach, inspecting it. "Max, this- are you alright." She asked, putting a hand on her shoulder. Max screamed, slapping her arm. Her breathing got harder as everyone in the class stared at her. She sucked in a breath as she ran out of the room and into an empty one. She suck to the floor, crawling under the teachers desk. Max pulled her legs up and buried her head into her knees. The girl let out a sob as she rocked back and forth. She then laid on the floor, still holding her legs. You could hear her whispering things to herself like, 'you're so worthless, or 'no one loves you'. She was degrading herself in the worst way possible.

The girl sobbed as she sat up in a crisscross position. She pulled her bag close to her going through one of the pockets. Max rolled up her sleeve placing the blade onto it.

She stared at her now bleeding arm. It had the word 'worthless' carved into it with tiny scratches all around it. On her other arms was the word 'stupid' with identical scratches to the other. On her stomach was carved 'fat' and 'ugly'. She had more scratches too. The poor girl sobbed, sitting in her own blood. She leaned her head onto the desk, falling asleep.

Mike looked at his friends worriedly. They all looked at each other with the same face. El raised her hand, "could we-

"Go."

//Author: I recommend listening to the song right about now, but you don't have to. It just adds more :)//

The five kids ran out of the class. They spilt up, Mike and Will going west, Dustin and Lucas going east, and El going north. It reminded the boys of when they were looking for Dart. El walked into an empty class room. "Goddamn it! Where are you?" As she was about to leave, she saw a strand of red hair peaking out from under the teachers desk. Gasping, she ran to it quickly. Her hand flew to her mouth once she saw the state the other girl was in. El crumbled to the floor with tears in her eyes. She shook the girl, trying to wake her up. "Max, wake up. Please get up! Shit, what am I gonna tell Mike?"

Max felt like she was floating. She could hear El crying and talking but she just didn't know what was going on. Everything was dark and scary and she just wanted to g- was that water?

The girl woke up with a jolt. She sat up quickly, seeing she was now in the middle of the room. El was sitting next next to her and rubbing her back. She looked around to see her four other friends, the art teacher, the school nurse, guidance counselor, and Hopper. Max looked at her now bandaged arms before looking back up at El.

"El I-"

"We're gonna get you help honey, I promise you we are."

They kept that promise, and now Max doesn't have to fake a smile or

wear battle scars on her arms. She's getting better and that's all that matters to them.

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

24. Twenty-four ※

It's been a couple weeks since the incident and the school had told Karen and Ted. Max was now in therapy two days a week. Billy's house was going up for sale today so Karen let Max invite El over. The two girls had been up in her and Mike's room the whole time. Mike was in the basement with the rest of the party.

Max was laying on her back with El on top of her. The two girls were kissing, more like making out. El kissed down to her jaw then her neck. She nibbled and licked at the soft skin. Max let out soft moans as she tugged on El's hair.

"I'll be right back!" Mike yelled running up the stairs. He quickly opened the door to his room and stared at the two girls. "OH MY GOD!"

Max pushes El off her in shock. She covered her bare chest with the blanket. "WHAT THE FUCK!" Max threw a pillow at him, "GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT!"

Mike hurriedly closed the door. He let out a sigh with eyes as wide as saucers. The door opened and El walked out quickly, racing to the front door. Mike caught her arm before she even reached the stairs. Max walked out, face as red as her vans. She had a hoodie on, his hoodie to be exact. Max got away from him quickly, running down to the basement. El looked at Mike before running after her girlfriend. Mike ran after them.

"What is going on?" Will asked as Max laid her head on his shoulder.

"They- she- her-" Mike made kissing noises and gestured between Max and El.

"Woah! You two kissed?!" Dustin said standing up.

El looked at Max before nodding. "We-"

"This is my girlfriend. She has super powers and can kick your ass. She also gives the best kisses in the world and has the softest hands.

She also gives the bes- well I'll let you figure that one out on your own. But she's really special and I think I love- woah."

El smiled at the other girl and walked over to her. She kissed the top of her head and pulled her onto her lap. She wrapped her arms around the slightly shorter girls waist as she rested her chin on her shoulder. "Don't worry, I think I love you too."

Will smiled at his two best friends, "that's cute I love you both."

Lucas nodded, "we're proud of you both. I know that could've been easy."

After the boys went home, Karen had invited El to sleepover. The brunette accepted and had called Hopper to let him know. "This tastes amazing. Mrs. Wheeler, thank you so much!"

"Oh thank you, El! Mike and Nancy always complain."

Max pouted as she drank the last of her chocolate milk. She stared at the cup with a big frown, wishing she had more. El poured her more, her heart fluttering when Max gave her a big toothy grin. Mike rolled his eyes playfully, "you're such a child." Max giggled, throwing one of Holly's fries at him. The small blonde stared at her in shock. The redhead smiled, giving her a pat on the head.

"So how's your day kids?" Ted asked as he picked at his chicken. Max was happily eating her mac and cheese as Mike rambled about the boys latest d&d adventure. Karen smiled at her son once he was done talking. Max looked up deciding now was a good time to do this. "Mom, dad I have something to tell you."

"What's wrong honey?"

"I'm dating someone."

"Who?"

Max looked at El smiling. Holly clapped her hands at the two while everyone, except Mike, stared in shock. El grabbed her hand, holding

it tightly.

"I-is that okay?"

Ted was the first to answer her, "that's more than okay. As long as your happy together, and don't hurt each other, we're perfectly fine. You don't need our validation to be who you want to. We'll love you no matter what."

Notes for the Chapter:

- A

25. Twenty-five ※

July 4th, 1987

"Max! The popcorn!"

"I know, I'm ma-"

"IT'S ON FIRE!"

"wh- OH SHIT!"

Max jumped to the stove and threw the pan that was on fire into the sink. She turned on the water, putting the fire out. Mike laughed at her as she sighed. " 's not funny."

"Yes it is!"

"Do we have chocolate milk?"

"Yes, Max, we have chocolate milk. God you're such a child!"

"Hey, you still play d&d and we're in high school, nerd!"

"Hey kids, we're home! Oh god, what's that smell?"

Max ran over to Karen, grabbing the bags out of her hands and placing them on the counter. "Max! Can you come here please?" The girl walked over to where Ted was sitting on the couch. He smiled at his daughter, giving her a sunflower and a blue lollipop. "Why a sunflower?"

"Yellow's always been my favorite color."

"Max! Come on, you need to pick a movie before they all get here!"

"Coming! Thank you."

The rest of the party walked down to the basement. Mike and Max's backs were turned to them, so El decided to scare Max. She tiptoed

over to the girl and shook her, yelling a light boo in her ear making her jump. Max turned around quickly, hugging her girlfriend tightly. El chuckled, wrapping her arms around the other girls waist and slightly pulling her off the ground. "You scared me!"

"I missed you."

"I missed you too."

"Gross!"

"You two saw each other yesterday!"

"We were sleeping!"

"No you were not! I could hear you guys! So gross, I'm so happy Nancy moved out and you got her room."

El and Max both blushed, looking down. Steve, Nancy, Jonathan, and Robin burst through the door. "We watching a movie or what?"

Max was sitting on El's lap, eating popcorn from the bowl and drinking her fifth glass of chocolate milk. She smiled as she looked at everyone. Her family. The girl leaned back into El.

"Hey El?"

"Yes my love?"

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"For everything. For loving me, dating me, being my person. I really needed that."

"I would do it all over again if it meant I got to hold you in my lap like this."

"I love you."

"I love you too."

Max never faked a smile again. Her scars were proof of what she had gone through. Proof that she had survived, and she couldn't be prouder.

26. Epilogue

March 10th, 2021

Max sat in the library of her house, writing on her laptop. El walked in with a giant baby bump. "Baby number seven seems like it's ready to pop. Max, when did we decide to have so many kids?"

"When we found out how adorable they are."

"But they're a handful!"

"Come on darling, don't you worry! It'll all be worth it one day."

"We're fifty and still having kids!"

"And? Just fifty more years until we're a hundred!"

"And what does that have to do with anything?"

"Dunno, just fun saying it!"

"You are such a dork."

"But I'm your dork!"

"Yeah yeah."

A small four year old girl ran over to Max with her tiny skateboard. "Mommy mommy! Can we go play?"

"Of course we can baby girl," the redhead said as she stood up and picked up her daughter. El smiled at them. The three walked outside. El sat on a lawn chair watching her child and wife skate around together. She chuckled as she recorded them on her new smartphone.

The two skated around for hours while El went inside to make them lunch. She made mini cheese burgers and fries, getting chocolate milk for her girls. The rest of their kids were out with their friends.

"Girls! Lunch!" Max picked up her daughter, running inside the

house. The small girl giggled as she held onto her mom for dear life. "Too fast mommy! I was gonna die!" She gasped dramatically. El chuckled, "she's just like her mom."

The three sat at the table eating lunch. Their daughter was rambling on about what happened at preschool. El just laughed at Max drinking her chocolate milk. The girl stared at her with an unamused look.

"What's so funny?"

"You've loved that ever since we were kids! Sometimes I wonder if you love it more than me!"

"I could never!"

"Thanks honey, I lo-"

"I was talking about the chocolate milk."

Both girls started laughing as they shared a sweet kiss. "Ew! No mommy! Bad! Not when I'm eating!"

Max pulled away from the kiss, tickling her daughters sides. "Hey! You little cock block! I was gonna get some tonight!"

"Max!"

"Mommy! I wanna be an airplane!"

"I think mommy's getting a little too old to do airplane."

"Please, one time?"

"Fine!" Max picked up her daughter by her stomach and started to run around carrying her. The small girl put her arms out. "Weeeee!"

El smiled warmly staring at the little family she had. She would go to the upside-down all over again just to see that smile on Max's face. Everything that had happened to them was worth doing again if it meant them being together in the end.

Notes for the Chapter:

And this is it ;) - A

Author's Note:

- A